THE HOME OF THE SOUL

CHARLES WAGNER

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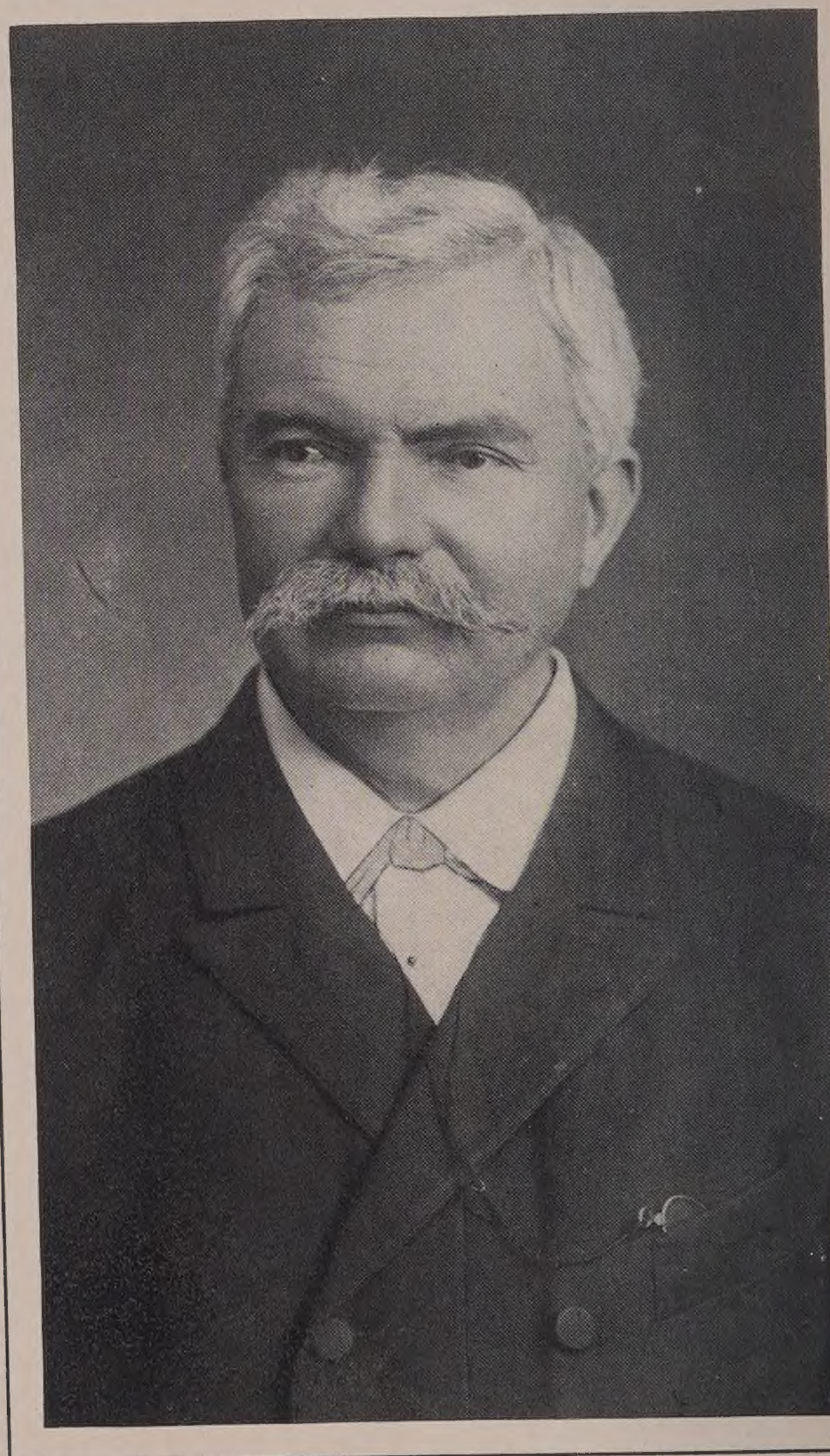
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THE HOME OF THE SOUL

By

CHARLES WAGNER

Author of "The Simple Life," etc.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY

LAURA SANFORD HOFFMANN

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

LYMAN ABBOTT, D.D., LL.D.



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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

Scripture quotations given in this edition follow the Authorized Version only in such instances as those in which chapter and line references were given in the original French. In other cases, translations have been made from the French quotations which, of course, were translations from an ancient text.

INTRODUCTION

PASTOR WAGNER'S RELIGION

THE character of Charles Wagner's ministry is indicated by the title of his church which is also the title of this book—"The Home of the Soul." "Frenchy" the American will perhaps call it; yet why is not "The Home of the Soul" as appropriate a title as "The House of God"? To one who believes in the "Universal Presence," who believes that "the heaven of heavens can not contain Thee, how much less this house that I have builded," Pastor Wagner's title is the better because the truer one. For the church is or ought to be a home for the training of the souls of men and characterized by a welcoming hospitality to all souls who desire either its shelter or its inspiration and its culture. That this is the aim of Pastor Wagner's

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church in Paris is indicated alike by the description of the church given elsewhere, and by the sermons which constitute this volume.

The Middle Ages have been called "the age of faith"; they certainly were not an age of humanity. The present is sometimes called a humanitarian age and sometimes the age of skepticism. Pastor Wagner unites the piety of the older time with the humanity and the intellectual freedom of the present. And this he does, not by tying the two together and so making a composite religion, nor by contending that there can be no true spirit of humanity without a spirit of conscious piety, a contention contradicted by life, but by showing that man's approach to God is through humanity as God's approach to man is through humanity, that we are to find God in His children and may often find Him in children who are wholly unconscious of His presence. A single striking paragraph from one of these sermons may serve to illustrate this characteristic of both his philosophy and his spirit. "He [God] has come to us

through our parents; He has given us life by our parents. They are God's promise of our existence in this world. We must thank Him through our parents, and not reach out to Him over their heads. It is rank ingratitude, lack of respect and want of piety, profanation and blasphemy, an infringement of the eternal law, to go thus directly to God. One can not reach God by other roads than those which He has designated." The religion of piety and the religion of humanity thus interpreted is one and the same religion; and the cure for skepticism is not turning our eyes away from our fellow men to find God, but looking for God in our fellow men.

Pastor Wagner's religion is therefore of necessity a social religion. To find God, study your fellow men; to serve God, serve your fellow men; to teach men the Fatherhood of God, inspire in them a sense of human brotherhood. This is not an incident in his religion; it is not a corollary from his religion. It *is* his religion. It enters into and forms his conception of Christ as it enters into and

forms his conception of God. The question whether Christ is God or man disappears, because the God we know and the Christ we know are both known only in humanity. "Christ is not a private individual. He is, for us, the spirit which embodies the total sum of moral light of which humanity is capable."

But this social religion is not set in contrast with individual religion. In Pastor Wagner's teaching socialism and individualism are not set forth in antagonism to each other. Society is made up of individuals, and social religion is at once the product and the cause of individual religion. The development of personality is at once the end and the secret of all social progress. "You abuse your paternal or maternal rights when you hinder the self-development of your child. You abuse your right of government, your right of society, when you restrict the personal development of citizens, impede the natural progress of their lives, and oppose the possession of their free convictions. You abuse your right of authority in the Church when you deny a

man his right to his own belief and to a personal interpretation of the spirit which speaks within him." True religion, the religion of a devout humanity, seeks both social order and individual liberty, for it perceives that a true and permanent social order is possible only when it is the spontaneous effect of individual development; the development of society and the development of individual personality are essentially identical.

One other characteristic of Pastor Wagner's teaching is not less fundamental and important, but it is more difficult to define. He is a teacher of religion, not of theology. The critic will call his sermons vague; but this vagueness gives them value to the lay reader. He does not intellectualize religion. He expresses it in terms of experience not in terms of philosophy. He does not discuss the Trinity; what interests him is the manifestation of God to men. He does not discuss the atonement; what interests him is the harmonization of men with God and therefore with each other. He does not discuss regen-

eration; what interests him is the new life consecrated to God in His children. The whole of his theology is summed up in this sentence in his Preface: "All evil that lies in the heart and the home, in religion and in politics, all the evil in life springs from one single neglect: We ignore the divine Unknown awaiting its hour in the depths of our hearts." To know all about the Unknown, to define His attributes, and fathom His purposes, is the hopeless ambition of theology; to become His familiar friend and companion, to live with Him and live for Him, to be guided by His wisdom, controlled by His will and inspired by His fellowship, to find in Him the Great Companion, is the hopeful aspiration of religion. Not to gratify the hopeless ambition of theology, but to satisfy the hopeful aspiration of religion, is the aim of the ministry of Pastor Charles Wagner.

LYMAN ABBOTT.

MAY, 1909.



PASTOR CHARLES WAGNER'S NEW INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH,
NEAR THE PLACE DE LA BASTILLE, PARIS.

PREFACE

THIS is the first message to the world delivered from that edifice known as "Le Foyer de l'Ame," or "The Home of the Soul"; so called because its purpose is to furnish shelter and a warm welcome to all those who are in search of a soul or are already in possession of one.

Everything is said within these walls with the object of addressing a particular appeal to that illusive unknown which is in every one of us, that divine forgotten something called the soul, the profound spirit of the frail thread of our existence by which alone we are great, by which alone man becomes brother to man, by which obstacles are overcome and differences blotted out. In every event here

commented upon, with every word of Christ, every message of the apostles, every cry of the prophets, or precept of ancient wisdom, with the expounding of every text, this appeal is made.

All evil that lies in the heart and the home, in religion and in politics, all the evil in life, springs from one single neglect: we ignore the divine Unknown awaiting its hour in the depths of our hearts. It takes the lowest place unheeded, mingling neither in our speech nor in our actions. And this is the reason that our life is without warmth and beauty, our beliefs are unavailing and our craft, in spite of its wonderful artifice, flutters with broken wings.

The trumpet must be sounded among the tombs of men's hearts, their homes, their careers, their schools and their churches. The trumpet must be sounded for the awakening of the soul in each one of us. Named or un-

named, defined or undefined, there lies the rich secret of life.

There is a spirit, a method of comprehending and employing life, which transforms and enriches everything for those who possess it. If we do not possess it all is emptiness, and we repeat, with the succeeding generations that fall into the pit, the refrain of disillusioned humanity: "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!"

But if this spirit be given us, nothing will be vain; no task, however lowly, will be devoid of beauty. It is like the sunshine falling upon the humblest meadow flower and transforming it into a star. It works miracles, makes the deaf to hear and the dead to walk. It gains amazing victories and opens doors deemed closed forever. It is a spirit of power and harmony, before which men and things bow as once the trees and the beasts of the forest acknowledged Orpheus. This is in the

main the spirit of the Evangelist, the spirit of Christ, the spirit truly human, and therefore divine. Humanity, even in the midst of sorrows, glows with a beauty hitherto invisible if this spirit be given to it. The endeavor to conquer and further this spirit is a splendid task, the most beautiful of all. It is impossible to find one more worthy of undertaking, for through it we learn to deserve and to hope. To love others, to grow in gentleness and strength, to despise our fellows less, to have less fear of those great in a worldly sense and less disdain for those of humble appearance—this is the task of brotherhood, kindliness, and faith.

You, who read this message, if you be weary, may God give you strength. If your thoughts are jangling and discordant, may peace and tranquillity enter into your hearts. If you are afraid, may you be soothed and calmed by the sovereign benignity shining from the stars,

the sweet divine peace, the pure glitter of which, on the clearest nights, is only a distant promise.

If you hate, may you feel the hand of Him who does not countenance man's hating his brother. If you have evil intentions, if you love evil, if your life is besmirched by sins you have committed through lack of energy, may the hand of the Almighty be heavy upon you; may you feel His reprobation for your check and His succor for your reclamation.

This is our wish for you, and now on the threshold of this book, as on the threshold of a home, we clasp your hand and say: *Pax intransibus; salus exeuntibus.*

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NOTE

Pastor Wagner's new Institutional Church, known as "Le Foyer de l'Ame," is within five minutes' walk of the Bastille, in the populous district known as the Faubourg St. Antoine. Here Mr. Wagner began evangelistic work more than a quarter of a century ago. As shown by illustrations in this volume, the church is a sightly and commodious building. The auditorium has a seating-capacity for about one thousand persons, and there are a dispensary with a staff of assistants, an operating-theater, and various other agencies of relief for the common people. The social hall becomes oftentimes the scene of merry romps by young people, in which the pastor joins heartily. Boys and girls often enjoy a promenade on the flat roof of the auditorium, where Pastor Wagner is nowadays in the habit of sawing and splitting wood—an avocation he has followed throughout life. At the age of fifty-seven he is as fond of wood-sawing and wood-chopping as ever. He also shows special pride in a carpenter's shop he has fitted up on the top floor of the building for the use of himself and his thirteen-year-old son. In an adjoining room is a school for cookery, where girls are taught.

Pastor Wagner is now definitely settled in the thick of Paris life and makes his home in the midst of his labors on an upper floor of the same building. This building cost 320,000 francs. Substantial contributions were made toward its erection by John Wanamaker, John D. Rockefeller, Levi P. Morton, and other American friends. "The Home of the Soul" numbers between 3,000 and 4,000 adherents in all parts of Paris, including Roman Catholics, Jews, and Free-thinkers, who have been attracted by the simple and forceful preaching of this famous Alsatian.—G.

THE HOME OF THE SOUL

I

FOLLOW ME

And he said unto another, Follow me.—Luke XIX., 59.

MY brothers, a part of the education of your children is entrusted by yourselves to your pastors, for, by the eternal will of God, there is no higher authority on earth over that which concerns children than parental authority. It is by means of this strong and inviolable bond, which joins a child to its parents, that God has vested the state of paternity with the authority of education. And the fact that there is a certain number of parents in this world who shirk their duty does not in the least impair the strength of the rule. Our education, or that part of it which is the most direct, profound and last-

ing, comes always from those to whom we owe our existence. It is therefore you who by proper authority assign us to your children, thus ceding to us that part of the performance which you do not feel yourselves capable of executing with sufficient efficacy. You invite us to join you in contributing to the formation of the moral and religious character of these children.

This work can only be efficacious when undertaken in concert with you and depends on our remaining in accord with one another, at least along the essential lines. We have need of your control and we desire that you come and listen to that which we are teaching. Your children are the treasures which you hold dearest. It can not but be interesting to you to hear the teaching of those things which concern their future, their hearts, their wills, their characters. You are more capable than they of understanding the words which they hear. Better versed in life, we can understand as this instruction is given them how great is their need of it. If they could only

understand it, assimilate it, what strength would be given them for later when traveling through the dark days as well as through the bright ones! The essential part of their happiness, the employment of their lives, the quality of their actions, the value and fashion of their relations to their fellow men, all these depend on the manner in which they receive this seed of ancient human truth which we implant in their young hearts.

As for us, their religious instructors, we are deeply conscious that if, for the accomplishment of this labor for your children, we were dependent solely on our own resources, or even on our union with you, we would not be equal to the task. If we had no traditional treasures, no accumulated stores, what would we have to offer them for the nourishment of their souls ? Never does the great problem of life confront a man so seriously as when he is called upon to transmit to a child the essential instruction. Never do the difficulties, the obscurities, the blemishes, of life strike us more forcibly than when the young are before

us, and it is for us to prepare them for the future.

But on the other hand, never are we more struck by the greatness and beauty of the moral patrimony left to us by the Fathers. What happiness in confronting the future to have the great past for support! We are nothing in ourselves. Human solidity, the general cohesion of public spirit, thoughts, traditions, ideas and beliefs come from afar, as the language itself which we speak. There are in the soul habits which are precious conquests. There are trails which centuries have labored at blazing. Not one of us is able to begin this gigantic task again alone. The past is behind us, with its conquests, its energy, its vitality. We are sustained in our work of education by a marvelous race of men who despaired not of humanity, who kept faith in spite of its obscurity and marched on in the hope of the amelioration of the future, and the distant victory of righteousness.

All these are our allies. We do not come to the children empty-handed; we come with

a venerable train of heroes, martyrs, thinkers and the noblest representatives of the human race.

We give to the children an education which is not a doctrinal one, nor one according to rote. We seek to draw them on by the radiant infection of the good, humanized, man made flesh, moving and contending among us.

The education which is not a heroic one is a lifeless education. Evil grows by the example of evil, by pernicious contagion, by the horrible contamination which is communicated from one man to another.

Good also grows, not only by the written or spoken word, but by the contagious heat of action, of devotion, of sacrifice.

Genuine evangelical education in the Christian Church is par excellence a heroic education. We have always with us, in speaking to our children, this Eternal Contemporary who said: "I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Christ is not a private individual. He is for

us, the spirit which embodies the total sum of moral light of which humanity is capable. He has revealed Himself to us in many phases, in universal breadth, height, and depth. He has given us plainly to understand that He does not wish to stand apart, inasmuch as He called Himself "The Son of Man." Christ is not a figure limited to a race, a time, a place. He is not the propagator of a definite doctrine, of a system forming men exactly to its pattern. Christ is all that is normal and all that is best in humanity, human and divine. It is for this, that He said: "I am the son of man and I am the Son of God." We can never adequately appreciate His bounty.

The spirit of Christ is therefore the essence of that which we find everywhere, in the East and in the West, in ancient and modern times, the best, the most supremely human, the most grandly generous, the most evident in the suffusion of good, bounty, and the gift of self. Christ, more than any one else, can say to us: "Nothing human is unknown to me."

You do not come, dear children, to one who

has monopolized virtue, moral beauty, and sanctity to the exclusion of others and who is jealous of his personal glory. You do not come to one upon whose head a crown has been set and who says: "All glory is mine and honor alone belongs to me; I am apart and he who is not for me is against me."

Christ and His spirit are in no way sectarian, exclusive, sullied by particularism. Everywhere that you encounter the true spirit of Christ you will find all the good of humanity in its train. He journeys not as one using others as stones for his own pedestal, but as one who is equal to our measure both great and small; "I am with you." He is chief because His soul contains the essence of all souls, of common soldiers as well as officers. Where two or three people are gathered together there is He also. It is the spirit of trembling and militant humanity, but nevertheless courageous and believing. It is the guide and consoler; it is that which is oldest and most young. It glitters like gold in the past; lights with its rays the future and the

unknown paths. It will never die. It is this which draws near to you in saying: "Follow thou me."

In beginning with a child in which lies the potential man, the first thing to make him understand is that nothing is more splendid than to be a human creature. Even in weakness and poverty, with pale faces sometimes and with all sorts of additional miseries, nothing equals the nobility of the human creature. This is what the child can not know.

You yourselves did not know it at the beginning of life. We endeavor to awaken you. The first period of existence is passed in sleep, both material and spiritual. The child is plunged in slumber, but the moment arrives when he must know himself, see himself and study himself. Then later he must begin to preside over his republic, for every one of us is a republic composed of all kinds of elements which can break into anarchy if they are not directed. Arrived at the age when he must attend to his own affairs and concern himself with his fellow men, that which we teach him

is neither theory nor precept, for precepts and theories in themselves are dry and dead. But we teach him life; we interpret life for him. We endeavor to communicate to him the shock which will make him vibrate. We place the leaven in his soul that it may ferment and that he may feel that the Word is not alone a phrase spread upon paper, but a power which forces itself into the blood, reaches the very marrow and suffuses its influence, alternately disturbing and quieting, in all directions.

Here is the method, dear parents and brothers. We endeavor to make your children appreciate the beauty of life. We show them a Christ who is not heraldic, who is not a certain type of figure reproduced in wood, leather, or painted icons, not a venerable Christ dulled by the dust of sacristies. We show them a living Christ, comparable to the likenesses which at certain epochs of artistic renaissance great artists have endeavored to depict, portraying Him according to the best models of their time, in sorrow, in strength, in joy, in symbolical details, by which they

endeavored to reveal His high and noble humanity.

To educate men, unveil before them this figure. It is precisely this which the childish mind demands as flowers demand the light.

The child, if you observe him closely, has in him two natures as St. Paul has declared us to have. There is in every child a vein of indocility and recalcitrance which brooks neither yoke nor discipline; but there is also the spirit of the disciple which is disposed to listen, and demands nothing better than a guide and even seeks anxiously for one whom it can follow.

This indefinable something in the child which resists and says no is a precaution taken by nature, or rather by God Himself, that the parents and guides in general do not too strongly impose their own will. We are tempted to abuse the privilege of having come first and of knowing the things of which the little ones are ignorant. There are some who order their children's lives as if they were their own property. This is what must be

avoided for fear of crushing the flower in the bud. God has given the child integrity and personal liberty for protection, as He has given to the rose its thorn. Say this over to yourselves softly and secretly, dear brothers, that you may not abuse the gift of these thorns and may not multiply them unnecessarily.

Never exaggerate. We have two limbs for walking. If one of them should grow longer than the other your walking would end in falling.

In order to preserve our equilibrium in the human strife we must walk with independence and respect.

This is plainly set forth in the saying: "Follow me." This is equivalent to saying, "Be yourself and inspired by my spirit."

By this spirit of independence we safeguard our originality, the cultivation of which is the duty of each one of us as the personal mark of God imprinted upon our souls. By the spirit of respect we become capable of receiving that which others bring to us and of profiting by their experience.

The disposition to be guided prepares youth for the inheritance of the past. Receptiveness and docility are the indispensable complements of originality. A true child will cling to his liberty and at the same time be tractable and confiding. Confidence can be found nowhere in a more touching form than in a child. There is no word or picture which can adequately convey that which is in the eyes of a child confidingly fixt on one and saying: "I believe in you."

Noblesse oblige, my brothers. And, in return for their trust in us, let us present a humanity in which children can have faith and which they can admire. It is to this end that we endeavor to reveal Christ to the spirit of the disciple which slumbers in every childish heart. It responds equally to the need of independence and of respect. Christ's nobility is not oppressive. There are certain heights which cast a shadow. There are depths to this shadow which the little ones can not penetrate. But on the other hand, there are heights which are, so to speak, transparent,

stript of their egoism and fraught with love. The light from above shines through their pure souls even into the hearts of the little ones.

Christ has respected individual liberty more than all men who have lived. In this He follows the Father who is in heaven and whose almighty power alone defines the limits of the human soul. Nothing forced, nothing strained, can ever please Him. He demands the free giving of heart and soul. Christ does precisely the same. He never imposed a doctrine. He has always knocked at the door of a heart with the object of promoting a conviction and stirring the judgment. He addresses the inward tribunal in every one of us which deliberates upon that which is good and that which is bad. He addresses an incorruptible judge who, in each one of us, is an interpreter and an echo of the voice of God Himself. Under this guidance, every one feels himself bound to act according to conscience and personal decision and, at the same time, he is submitting to a most irresistible

moral ascendency. In consequence, the two elements which are in every child, the aspiration toward individuality, and the seeking of a guide whom it can follow, are satisfied in the person of Christ. Oh, how I desire, in teaching the things of life to these children, to show them the radiance of the moral beauty in this figure!

Righteousness should not be regarded as a domineering mistress towering over us with furrows of self-will upon her brow and, as old Montaigne, in his picturesque language, says, "with a face too imperious and magisterial by far." Righteousness should shine softly for us as the spring sunshine, and our souls awaken at its contact as the buds respond to the April warmth, bursting their bounds and releasing the imprisoned flowers. Education consists in quickening the seed of good which lies in every one of us, stimulating it with warmth and kindness, calling it into life by the fervor of a life already potent.

When the conscience of a child is shocked by something ugly, of such a nature that, ac-

cording to his fair judgment, he condemns it, casts it out, and inwardly withdraws himself from it, on that day he has without doubt taken a step, but a negative one.

But when he has been the attentive witness of an act which contains the veritable essence of good, the determination of a human being to give himself for something which is just and right, when he has comprehended the beauty, the infinite value, of such an act and has admired it without restriction and without reserve, on that day he has made a great and positive step. He emerges upon a higher life; it is the hour of his real birth, of his birth to magnificent and spiritual humanity. In this hour God has called him by his name; he has begun to be cognizant of his nobility. He is become a new creature, and, as the Evangelist says, he has been born to life eternal.

"Follow thou me!"

We say to children, follow Christ first in His simplicity; instruction is not good unless it be simple, simple as the light of day, simple as the rays which descend upon the buds, that

it may flood the soul and that the soul may bathe therein.

Follow Christ in His simplicity. He carries no unnecessary burden in His train. He is clear as the mountain spring, and His words are refreshing and vivifying to him who quaffs.

Follow Him in His decision. He stands for only one thing. Children sometimes try to do two things and in this they are as men. The majority evince a great propensity to pursue at one time two objects totally contrary, the good and the bad, to worship God and to serve mammon. This is the wisdom, the riches, of the great. They squander it and they lose their life; and the little ones strive for this same wisdom. But Christ is a stranger to this; He stands for one thing; when He says yes, it is yes; when He says no, it is no. One can build one's dwelling upon this word because it is the rock. The Master in no way wishes to please the whole world. And you, if you love all men, do not try to please them all, for this is the way to betray them. If you love your fellow beings,

be one kind of man and not two kinds or several. Hold always the one opinion. If you have something to say which may not please for the moment, do not be afraid to say it. Harsh words which are said perhaps unwillingly, and which cause temporary pain, will eventually work their good, because love has actuated the saying of them. We have need of friends who tell us harsh truths with a kind heart, that we may understand them and not be wounded by their bitterness.

Follow Christ also in His benevolence. There is a kind of benevolence which is indifference; its smile hovers about the lips of the superficial. It is a smile which is not meant for others. It says: "You are all nothing to me; I smile at you, but it is a smile of satisfaction, because of my personal sagacity which consists in having taken the best part of life and never having concerned myself with the affairs of others."

There is another kind of benevolence which is active; this consists in wishing the best for every one and not for self alone. It consists

further in the desire to find the good which is in others. This benevolence is discriminating and patient in following the track of the hidden good as the experienced hunter perceives a bird asleep under a bundle of hay or cowering against a clod of earth where the untrained eye sees only straw or furrows. This clear-sighted benevolence pursues the search of the good. Even where you see nothing it uncovers treasures. You declare that there is nothing there but failure and emptiness. It lingers and still continues the search. You say: "Do not go there; you will find nothing; we have just come from there; it is useless to search." Benevolence, which has faith in the good, searches nevertheless and ends by finding it.

The genius of the Evangelist consists in finding the nuggets of gold in the mounds of sand. The genius of the Evangelist consists in awakening that which is best in every one. There are those who awake the brute and evoke the beast in men. When they meet a man, their influence will result in arousing in

him the serpent, or the tiger, or the fox, or some other insidious beast; their influence consists in stirring the muddy bottom, the dregs in our hearts.

But there are those who can stir the forgotten soul slumbering in our depths; men who, by the power of the Spirit, make us live according to the best that is in us. We live sometimes overwhelmed with contempt of ourselves, in the profound conviction that we belong in such and such a category, mediocre and vile, in the category of poltroons, for example, without nerve and without courage. When a man of courage draws near, he awakes courage in us. It is a strange joy to one who believes himself a poltroon to feel in himself the spark of bravery, the spark of valor, awakened by the contact of one who is really valiant and brave. We could receive no more splendid favor than the reminder that we come of a race of heroes. Those whose hearts are pure and generous are the occasional instruments of calling forth generosity from hearts which have been closed.

Christ is the awakener of souls. He lifts His voice in the midst of a lost world, and lo! from the depths which have never vibrated an echo mounts to Him; His lambs hear His voice. Follow Him in benevolence; we must learn in this world to seek and find that which is lost; to search the depths. We must believe and follow as inventors their discoveries; as explorers the new worlds.

There is a verse in the Apocalypse which says: "And I will give him the morning star." Christ, in drawing near to a child, says: "My child, follow me and I will give you the morning star."

In the morning shadows, over the clouded meadows, a steady beacon burns. It is suspended from the necklace of night like a diamond. You look at this morning star and it seems to you more beautiful than either the day or sun; for the day and the sun are reality, but the morning star is hope and promise. This hope and promise are more human; conform more to our expanding and awaken-

ing nature, than the dazzling light of day or the sun which travels the sky.

"I will give you the morning star. If you will be my disciple and follow me I will kindle a flame in your heart which shall illumine the night, foretell that which is to come, and that to which you and all mankind can attain."

"I will reveal to you your entire destiny at a single glance, and you will understand that temporary suffering is not too great a price for the glory which shall be manifested in us."

"I will give you the morning star that it may shed its tender cheering light upon your path. I will give you the morning star, the treasure of treasures, than which there is nothing greater, nothing more beautiful. When you shall have comprehended its vastness, its serene and holy splendor, all earthly things which seemed once so bright and fair will be dimmed beside its brilliancy. I will give you the morning star!"

This, my dear little children, is what I am thinking of for you to-day at the termination of our lessons for the year.

All things have a time, but the time which we have for teaching you is very short. Often we wish that we might keep you longer, but each one must go to follow his own path. You will depart to thread your separate ways. Keep by your side the Companion of whom I have just spoken. If, when you wake in the morning, life seems difficult and bitter, call upon Him. He will be beside your bed like a good father softly soothing his child. He will strengthen you for the daily task. When you go to bed at night confide to Him your doings of the day and seek His advice. There is nothing more helpful along the changing road of life than a companion who tells us the truth; a companion in whom we can have complete faith; an Elder Brother, gentle but brave. He will say to you: "My child, fear nothing in life, for I know all. Keep close to Me, and if the struggle grows hard, if you suffer and are afflicted by misfortune and harsh injustice, take My hand. Keep close to Me that I may show you how good can be mightier than evil. When your soul

is full of bitterness against those who have wrongfully used you, let Me plead their cause in your heart. I too was crowned with thorns and yet I pardoned all. Follow Me in suffering and in pardoning!"

I am firmly convinced that if you stand by such a chief, He will increase the strength and joy of your life and you will say to yourself: "What happiness to have found Him in my youth; He is the light upon my path! He makes smooth the way through life and through death."

II

THE ONWARD MARCH

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself.—Matt. XVI., 24.

THIS text marks the stages of "the onward march." I wish, in appealing to your individual experience, to approach you in the spirit of the divine wisdom, personified in Christ, our Chief, and to show you the sequence of these stages. They are all destined to prepare you, step by step, for the total fulfilment of your mission.

Christ says: If any one will follow me. Mark well the "follow." It is for us to consider the magnificent evolution of the destiny of mankind, in which the two elements, human and divine, are indissolubly united.

For such a march, it is evident that there

are precautions to be taken, a system to pursue, rules to follow. It has its laws. The greatest things and the most beautiful are also the most difficult to realize.

We find before us a natural work, inasmuch as it conforms to our nature and our loftier destiny, but, at the same time, it demands effort, vigilance, and the maintaining of an inspiration coming from on high.

Seeing us, knowing us, and realizing that, for the most part, we are dissatisfied with our results, uncertain of our ways, disillusioned, erring, and suffering, Christ tells us: You can follow me: I make you no fallacious promises. With the severity of a personal discipline, voluntarily accepted and which I call a Yoke, I offer you liberty, exemption, and the expansion of your entire being. Will you try it? Then deny yourselves.

Here is the method indicated. Let us grant at first that it offends common sense and does not appear reasonable. Does it not seem much more logical that, to realize his destiny, a being should identify himself more and more

with himself and persist in the assertion of himself? To deny oneself! Is that not to deny the very development to which the Eternal Will has wished us to attain?

Indeed, it is a wrong denial. There exists a suppression of self, of one's nature, of God-given abilities, which is not permissible. In short, certain denials would be moral suicide. Often taught and practised in the name of the Evangelist, these mutilations of the human spirit have nothing in common with the denial of which Christ speaks.

To deny oneself is only possible when one has begun by being oneself.

In order to understand this word of Jesus, we must first study the stages of life and their meanings.

The first stage, immense, full of preparatory tasks and marvels of perseverance, consists in the establishing of personality.

The entire universe, if you consider it in its evolution, appears to be applied to the production of the personal being, such as we recognize in man. Through the successive

degrees of inorganic and animal life, through the obscurities of unconsciousness, a light slowly penetrates. The recognition of self is born. Man, during the whole first part of his existence, making progress, as it were, through the natural and historical stages which have preceded him, awakens to his personality.

This awakening must be encouraged and rendered as complete as possible. To repress, arrest, or thwart a personality is a crime of abortion which strikes at the very germs of life. There is in every human creature the realization of a divine thought. If you do not respect the individual, the qualities he possesses, the aspirations which are in him, you suppress the divine work in that creature. For example, you abuse your paternal or maternal rights when you hinder the self-development of your child. You abuse your right of government, your right of society, when you restrict the personal development of citizens, impede the natural progress of their lives and oppose the possession of their free convictions. You abuse your right of authority in the

Church when you deny a man his right to his own belief and to a personal interpretation of the spirit which speaks within him.

Therefore, it should not be said that the asserting of the human personality is in any way a capital crime, a primary cause of revolt and sinful error. In any case, human personality is sacred. To establish it, to strengthen it, to make it zealous and strong, able to resist and overcome outside influences, both oppressive and tyrannical, is the first of all duties. A wise training arms a knight, gives him a vigorous body, tempers his character, and then bids him set forth.

If we endeavor to estimate in thought all that is necessary for the realization of a normal human creature, well poised, robust, and powerful, we shall still better comprehend how amply is justified that affection which nature has put in our hearts for those whose education has been entrusted to us. The love of parents for their children is a profound manifestation of the Divine Will. In this love, if it be true and conscious of itself, lies the

solemn indication of what there is of value in our children.

Every individual trait is the result of immense labor, the origin of which can be traced back to the will of God Himself. This labor we must respect, in respecting the personality, in guarding to it its rights, and in aiding its development.

To continue: personality may be compared to a rare fruit, which has ripened on a tree, surrounded by every care, having enjoyed the sun and dew, and profited by their culture. When this fruit matures, a great danger presents itself, namely, that it will spoil without having served its purpose.

Now when personality is formed, armed, and established, the great danger is that it, too, will spoil, without having served its purpose. Here begins another stage. It is no longer a question of the creation of self, of the nutritive system through which is imbibed the warmth of the sun and the moisture of the earth necessary to growth. It becomes now a question of bestirring ourselves. So far we

have drunk in, assimilated, and directed everything to the one end: growing. Now when we arrive at maturity, we must give ourselves, must offer ourselves like the fruit.

Wo to the fruit which, able to reflect and know itself, considers itself too good to be offered, and prefers to remain as it is, rotting on the tree and failing in the fulfilment of its destiny. This is the second stage of life.

It is at this second stage that Christ is waiting for us and to which His counsel applies.

The majority of men consider themselves as a rare fruit, to be conserved. They shut themselves up as in a jewel casket, and there they spoil. They lose themselves, as, in the end, that fruit will be lost which, jealously guarded in a sure hiding place, fails the appointed hour for its consumption.

Do you understand now why Christ says: He that will follow me, let him deny himself. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it? The salvation of the most precious fruit consists in cutting it in pieces, offering it to little

children, to guests under your roof, to friends at your table, making them relish it, assimilate it, take it into their blood. Of such a fruit it can be said that neither the warmth of the sun caressing it, nor the rain falling upon it, nor the flower from which it came in the spring and which the bees have pilfered, has been in vain. Everything has had its hour and performed its function.

This is what men will not admit. They are fruits which will not allow themselves to be eaten. Their desire is to be conserved, they are afraid to offer themselves. They are timber and will not give themselves to be made into planks and beams for the building of houses. They are oil and will not be consumed to make light.

In this man deceives himself miserably, and through this error loses his life. Oh greatest of sorrows!

Nothing great is accomplished in this world without sacrifice. It is in consuming itself that the sun engenders life. Every place where a creature is growing, every place where

a child is developing, there is sacrifice. It is offered to him and he takes it; his life flourishes in the soil of accumulated devotions as the grain ripens in the fertile earth.

Real life is a succession of well-understood denials, building themselves one upon the other, laying the foundations upon which rises the city.

There is one way of looking at personality which is the end and destruction of everything. It makes for the unhappiness of men. They immure themselves in their personality, they barricade and bury themselves in it, and this is the result: they are doomed to witness the coming to pass of all that which they most dreaded.

My Brothers, look at yourselves and your lives for a moment. Arrived at the zenith of youth and vigor, with beauty, intelligence, and material power, with all the other gifts which you have—and the poorest of us have them—what should you do? If you are molded and armed as was our knight of whom I have already spoken, there remains only one thing to

do, expose yourselves to danger, give of yourselves freely, simply, without fear, without reckoning; otherwise you will soon become miserable slaves, content neither to increase nor diminish, and your powers will wane the more surely with every day that you do not bestir yourselves. Govern yourselves as you would govern an estate that it may prosper. Make with your powers and your gifts a sure place which life itself can not sweep away. Employ yourselves, awaken to yourselves! The only things which we really possess are the things which we have given. This is what Christ says to those self-preservers, inveterate misers and cowards, who are terrified lest thieves break through and steal, moths corrupt, and conspirators come to rob of fortune, youth, and vigor. To all such men, having clear eyes destined to kindle and to burn out, having sturdy limbs which one day will stagger under them, like pack-bearers too weak for their load; to all such men, for whom the gradual and inevitable destruction is a sort of prison, in which they perish before their time;

to all such slaves, the Master says: Leave off your chains, quit your prison, your miserable hovels, and follow me! Learn true wisdom and how, in giving your life, you shall save it.

Life is made to be given. The poorest life glows with an incomparable fire, becomes a jewel, scintillating with love, benevolence, invincible hope.

Observe the earth and what transpires upon it. We are all students here, in a school where little progress is made because the Master is not heeded.

Christ is in accord with the lilies of the field, the birds of the air, the verdure of the hills, the dew which falls, and the vapor which rises, with all the laws inscribed on the human conscience, as well as on the mountain fastnesses.

Consider how our life is made. In the morning we are nurslings, climbers, reaching out toward life in all directions. We take, we receive, we store. Our task is to grow. The joy of those who watch us comes precisely from that by which we profit. No one could

demand more from a man at this stage of his life.

But already, at this preliminary epoch, which is, as it were, the avenue of adolescence, man begins to perceive that, if he is made only to aspire and think of himself, he will remain too long the egoistical nursling. Consequently, in order to remain in the running and keep abreast of his age, he feels himself impelled to become a little less personal. Here are developed youthful friendships and comradeships which are often veritable passions of altruism.

Later, it is love which enters into our hearts. Genuine love is not only the most supreme exaltation of our nature, but a liberal and lofty gift, a desire to live for others, a forgetfulness of self in those we love. The real formula of love is this: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Those who have never felt this wisdom, nor comprehended its incalculable happiness, inexhaustible to him who finds himself in possession of the joyous giving of self, have understood nothing of love.

Then the time arrives when we learn to know fatherhood and motherhood. Is this not fraught with tenderness, voluntary servitude, the magnificent giving of self? The mother especially is beautiful in this world, in all the grandeur of her sacrifice; that is her crown, before which the strongest men do reverence. She is beautiful, even under her wrinkles and white hairs, with a beauty as inalterable as that of youth. She is beautiful to our eyes by the marvelous devotion of which she is the perpetual testimony through countless generations.

Then finally comes the time when we become grandfathers and grandmothers. Personally, our powers have waned; we are no longer as valiant in the struggle; our tread is not so firm, nor our voice so strong. We have submitted to certain restrictions on our lives and our desires. But our souls have expanded if we are equal to our mission and masters of our art. A true grandfather lives in others and loves his little ones. Seeing the approaching twilight of his own days, he salutes the

dawn in the young hearts about him, and his happiness in the breaking of this new day surpasses his sadness at seeing the evening shadows closing in on his own life.

In this wise, the ideal of human life consists in giving itself unto the last penny and then departing when the coffer is empty, not only regretting nothing, but content in having saved that coffer by giving all.

We have been moored to the shores by many chains. Little by little these chains have become detached, and the bark is liberated. It departs for the Unknown. Here is the real life and the fitting death which is the entrance to a better world.

Now, let us reassemble our thoughts for the comprehension of the great lessons of the Evangelist, which are not above the heads of the smallest children and yet are as high as the farthest stars. There is a force which impels us to rise above the personal. There is a higher life than the individual life, limited to a single being and his interests. Something in us, precisely this splendid and won-

derful love for others, carries us to the very threshold of that life. To know this love is to embark on the spiritual life, the life of God Himself. It is to rise out of the ruins and sacrifices of life, as you have known it, the catastrophes and failures of which can not be evaded, and to bridge the gap between our ephemeral existence and the life eternal. To renounce the emptiness means the gaining of the fulness of life. To renounce death spells the conquest of life.

The gospel is the religion of life, the miracle which makes the blind to see and the dead to live. Blind and dead we all are, from the beginning of life to its end, in so far as we have not comprehended the great secret which consists in offering ourselves in order to place ourselves higher.

Men have always had a vague presentiment of the grandeur which lies in sacrifice. In spite of their baser passions, when they have really, simply, and profoundly admired, the object of their admiration has been a hero or a martyr. Instinctively, they have felt what

there was of magnificence in throwing oneself in the balance for one's people, one's country, the kingdom of God. They have appreciated what there was of immortality in this manner of dying.

These, my Brothers, are the simple but sublime truths contained in the message of Christ: "If any one will follow me, let him deny himself." He sees us burdened with a load all too heavy and cumbersome, dragging about our appetites, our rancors, our paltry fears, our passions like poor beasts. And he cries to us: "Come! I will show you liberty, bright mornings and evenings fraught with hope. I will lead you on to a combat in which you will be happier than in the sleep of indolence. I will show you poverty which enriches and struggles which will make you glad. Follow me, I have the secret of happiness. If you bear my yoke you will be eased. You will find repose for your souls, overwhelmed by the battle against the impossible."

This, my Brothers, is the lesson of lessons. It must be oft repeated, tested during the en-

tire course of life, its alphabet mastered, as one learns the rudiments of the sciences or arts. We must constitute ourselves apprentices, bringing forth at first most imperfect music and yet dimly perceiving its hidden beauty. But the Master is there, calling to us, encouraging us! He will make light the dark places, the shadows of night, the sorrows of infirmity, the deepest misery, the grave itself. He is harmony, plentitude.

In learning His lessons, we can turn the meanest dross into purest gold. We transform our infirmities, our sorrows, nay, even our tears, into riches for others and acknowledge the power of God in traversing the shadows of this earthly vale.

Forward! Gird up your loins, and, step by step, follow Him, Him and His valiant command, His order, the inscribing of which begins in characters traced upon the sands of our mortal shores and ends in an immense and glorious scroll emblazoning the horizon.

III

THOSE WHOM WE FORGET

And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you—
In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.—1. Thess. V., 12, 13.

MY Brothers: My intention is not to treat this text from the point of view of the spiritual labor wrought, among their flocks, by pastors and all those whose particular mission is the disseminating of religious truths throughout the world. I wish to expound it in its broader sense, beyond the limitations of a definite scope or mission, and to consider, in its entirety, the work going on among us; that is to say, the social service rendered to us by our fellow men: And we beseech you to know them which labor among you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake! From among these duties, we

shall choose the humblest, the most ordinary for consideration, those toward which our attention is most infrequently directed.

There exist, my Brothers, two ways of being religious. The one consists in having a separate category for religious things, for the sphere of thoughts and sacred emotions, and to keep, on the other hand, a province for the things of this world, the ordinary tasks and the daily life.

According to this method, a great and ardent piety may be developed, at the moments particularly consecrated to religious matters. One enters, at such a time, as into a sanctuary, and, in this sanctuary, one finds the customary religious attention; the saintly words resound, the images attract the eye, the accustomed hymns soothe the ear. One is surrounded by an edifying atmosphere, favorable to comforting and elevating thoughts, in praise of which too much can not be said.

But afterward, what happens? One leaves that sanctuary as one has entered it. The sanctuary remains; its doors close behind us,

its images are blotted out, its voices die away, and, slowly, by a well-worn road, we retrace our steps to the ordinary world, to the affairs of every day, the current events.

In the sanctuary we have refreshed our hearts, lifted our hands to heaven in righteous and pious prayers. Once outside, for the contest with our fellow men (remember that I am speaking of the method which classes the religious world apart), once outside, we roll up our sleeves. The time for sentiment has passed, the hour has arrived for action and calculation, for that which we call worldly affairs, which must be conducted with worldly wisdom. There must be a time and a spirit for everything. For directing every-day affairs, an every-day spirit is necessary, one of the earth earthy. For conducting religious affairs the garment of religion is donned. In the sanctuary one is a different man. But that man and his garment are afterward carefully put away.

This religion is not the religion of Jesus. No matter what good it contains, it is not the

religion of the Master. The Master has taught us another religion, not one, which, with great skill and spiritual ingenuity, separates the religious from the temporal, but a religion which blends the spiritual and temporal after the manner of leaven.

I do not hesitate to say that the other way of regarding religion seems to me pure dilettanteism. It is a luxury, sometimes agreeable, bearing much solace to esthetic souls, but it is a deceptive luxury. In short, its beauty is altogether superficial. It permits a man to be filled with unctuous sentiments and, at the same time, with the most dire egoism; so to order his life that its practical side mingles no more with his religious emotions than does oil with water. This conception of religion constitutes, during his entire existence, a separation between man and that which he proclaims to be his faith, his belief; a separation of his life from his theories.

Religion is not a theory. Religion is not a momentary retreat, in which one gives one's self up to certain joyous emotions, none the

less personal, exclusive, and purely selfish, by reason of their assumption of the garb of human kindness.

Religion is a power which assails life, as the sculptor assails the block of marble or granite, for the graving of a soul. You remember the wonderful parable in which Christ seeks to make men comprehend the true religion, when He says to them:

I will make clear to you that of which I speak; I will tell you that which shall come to pass in the last day, the day of final reckoning. You will all be there. These shall be told to come and those to go. And one shall be as astonished as another. One word explains all, a word of elemental justice: That which ye have done unto one of the least of my brethren, ye have done unto God. We are told that God is not an individual, having interests of His own, which must be acknowledged by separating Him from man and then ignoring Him. We are taught that there is a partnership between God and man, signed, sealed, and inviolable.

According to the Master, the true religion, which alone counts and prevails, is that which tends toward the finding of the Eternal in the ephemeral, God in man, the highest and holiest things along the ordinary course of life.

True religion and the religious spirit consist in transforming that which is purely commonplace, and sometimes even banal, into something noble, lofty, and spiritual. Christ has never shown us any other way. The character of true religion was most impressively delineated by His institution of the Last Supper. With the Last Supper and the commandment, "Do this in remembrance of Me," Christ transforms an ordinary repast of bread and wine, by which our bodies are strengthened, into a symbol of the higher life, where we are nourished by His spirit. In the material act of eating bread and drinking wine, we are performing the highest act of spiritual brotherhood. We fraternize with all the divine sources from which the soul derives its vigor and are united, in spirit, to all men, not

only to those of our own time but to the men of all ages, to all our brothers, no matter how distant, who have shared the destiny which is ours, tormented and glorious, miserable and magnificent.

True religion, therefore, is a mighty impulse toward the finding of the spiritual life and the Spirit itself, in the things of every day.

Let us now consider the deductions which can be drawn from our text and particularly those which apply to the manifestations of humble piety.

When good befalls us, when favors are bestowed upon us, and it is a question of feeling and showing appreciation or esteem, respect or gratitude, the best expression of these emotions is not to abandon oneself to demonstrations, directed toward a lofty and distant being. Let us rather interpret these sentiments directly, practically, strongly as well as sincerely, and apply them to the affairs of every day. We have only to follow the path which God Himself has indicated. It will be easy for me to prove to you that I do

not advance a theory startling in its novelty, but that I am humbly trying to trace the footsteps of the Eternal, imprinted upon the sands of our mortal shores.

Generally, when good befalls us, we say, with reason: "The source of all good is God." But this source connects with us through intermediary channels.

For example, the milk given to us by our mother and the very life which parents transmit to their children, come, surely, from the eternal source of all life. But God has willed that there be parents to transmit life from generation to generation. In consequence, it is His will which makes our father and our mother appear, to our eyes, the transmitters of the spark of life.

If we go directly to God, to thank Him for having allowed us to partake of life, to partake of this thing sometimes so dark and gloomy, but none the less wonderful, precious, and lofty; if we thank God directly, forgetting or despising our parents because they are only creatures and mere instruments; if we find it

more fitting to carry our souls full of gratitude to the Author of life Himself, to Him who lights the sun and holds the world in His hand; if we declare that to Him alone belong honor and gratitude, our piety is misguided. We owe not only a proper respect, but a filial and pious gratitude, to His humble representatives on earth, our parents. If we displace this sentiment, endeavoring to make it mount to its source, without a thought for the intermediaries, we are in open insurrection against the course which God Himself has laid out for us. He has come to us through our parents; He has given us life by our parents. They are God's promise of our existence in this world. We must thank Him through our parents, and not reach out to Him over their heads. It is rank ingratitude, lack of respect and want of piety, profanation and blasphemy, an infringement of the eternal law, to go thus directly to God. One can not reach God by other roads than those which He has designated. That which we affirm here is but an application in detail of the great guiding word:

I am the Way, the Truth, the Life; none can come to the Father but by Me.

Another example: A society occupies itself in pious and charitable works, established in the mother country or abroad,—a missionary society, for instance,—finds itself in need of powerful cooperation. It has spent much and needs more. What do those in need of money do? They go and beg assistance of men who have much or little. Having obtained the money, they think, sometimes, of thanking their benefactors. But they are told: No, do not thank us; it is God whom you must thank.

Take care that there does not lurk here an error and an instance of ingratitude. All things, unquestionably, come from God, but, in this particular instance, you have not contented yourselves with appealing to God for aid. You have, in addition, addrest your appeal to men. And therefore it is to men that a part of your thanks are due.

I can well understand how those who have given the most have the feeling that, after all, it is not they who deserve the thanks. Some-

thing tells them that they have given that which does not belong to them, that they have only disposed of riches held in trust. They think, therefore, that the recognition of the good intentions which they have carried out should mount to a higher source. But in the world where the first shall be last and the last first, the unknown world which Christ wishes us to explore, in order to mount higher, we must often descend. Perhaps these benefactors, instead of bidding us carry our thanks higher, would do better to say: Direct your thanks toward a humbler source. In short, from whence comes wealth, money, capital, the riches which humanity possesses and which are confided into certain hands? All those who reflect upon the origin of money, the real origin, according to the laws of social economy, know that its source lies in labor. It has its source in the labor of the multitude which peoples the factories, the studios, the offices, the commercial shops, the hospitals, the laboratories, the prisons; it has its source in the labor of men, buried in the depths of the

mines, or on lonely farms, wresting from the earth its products. That is the real source of wealth. Those who say: "Do not thank us; thank God," are not wrong at bottom, but they do not look in the right direction. In order that their gratitude may be justly directed, it is necessary for them to bend their gaze lower; because, in this instance, God, source of all blessings, has sent us these blessings through very humble instruments.

Let us thank Him through these instruments; let us employ the method which God Himself has recommended. He has come to us by one road; let us meet Him on the same road.

And now, my Brothers, I call you to witness that the humble hands by which God works in this world are often ignored by us. By joint calculation, we direct wholesale gratitude to those who seem to represent everything. In this we commit a grave oversight; all those who labor among us merit our consideration and our thanks.

Another example: Oh! I shall make you

assist at the birth of my thought, in order that none may remain ignorant of it, and that all you who are here may entirely understand it. We are here in the presence of one of those teachings which come to us from the forgotten Evangelist, which must needs be translated into the blood and bone of every day.

You are sometimes invited to dine with a friend. You pass a pleasant hour in his house. It was a happy thought of his. Nothing gives more pleasure than good, loyal, and simple hospitality. To employ, as proofs of affection, those means which are material, but into which one can put spirit, gentleness, tenderness, qualities of heart, is a good method and very human. The man who has invited you puts his house at your disposal for your recreation. He says to you: You are at home; here you can breathe freely; that which is mine is yours. And that man is right in acting thus. And you, on your part, are right if you extend to him your gratitude. But at the same time, take care that you are not ungrateful. When you are at his table, all that you

see or partake of, all the details forming the whole which has been arranged for you, from whence does it come? From the fields, through the kitchen, and through many humble labors. How many people have exerted their ingenuity for you! Granted they are underlings, it would be ingratitude to ignore them. Theirs are the humble hands with which God works, in the fields or in parts of the house where those who do not ordinarily appear, are found. If we forget them, we forget God. True Christians, in seeking God, look, sometimes, beneath them, quite low, in the depths. And if any one find it blasphemous or, at least, exaggerated, that we make God appear in obscure services rendered by dependents, we can only refer them to a perusai of the Scriptures. And further, inspired by the higher teachings of the Scriptures, we say: there are two aspects of God. The one is wondrous and imposing, with which He opens, at dawn, the portals of the east, to make His sun shine upon the earth. In this aspect He cries into the night: "Let

there be light, and there was light." This is the God of grandeur, of majesty, the God who is so mighty that all the gold of the setting suns and innumerable stars are but fringe on His vestment.

There is another God; it is an invisible God, a forgotten God, a God who labors in the roots of the trees, a God who toils in the hidden depths where eyes can not penetrate. This is the God who also works in the hearts and hands of brave men. It is the God of service; a God who, slowly, with ineffable patience, builds up the universe, step by step; the God of whom Christ has said: "My Father works unceasingly." This is not the conventional idea of God, a mighty monarch, blazing with jewels, around whom all creation gathers to do Him homage.

It is a God who labors, the God of brawny arms, of streaming brows, of long and painful, but unflagging, efforts, and one who, through thousands and millions of years, accomplishes, with scrupulous patience, the birth of all creation.

This God, my Brothers, is the God of the gospel, the God of Jesus Christ, the humble God who walks with each one of us, shivers with cold in the rags of the poor, the God, who, for this very reason, is overlooked by our superficial glance and too often forgotten. It is this God whom we must remember. It is He whom we must honor in the least of things.

The truly religious heart is never deceived. It perceives God in the depths, in humility, upon the lowly way of the humblest sorrows, the humblest duties and in tasks having least glory and brilliance.

It is necessary to look very closely in order to perceive this God, just as, in the examination of ancient medals, coins, lace, or tapestry, one often has recourse to a magnifying glass. This God does not approach with majestic steps, compelling the gaze of the vulgar or vain. He is silent. He is so concealed that it requires much soul to discover Him. But once seen, He can be found at all times and in all places.

My Brothers, I shall never forget the two occasions upon which I saw this God.

The first time, I was about twenty-five years old. I was at Ban-de-la-Roche, in the district of Oberlin, where that good and rugged pastor often preached the gospel, pick-ax in hand, clearing the ground or vigorously breaking stones on the roads he was building.

I recall his life, his simple and compelling sermons. For example, one Sunday at the conclusion of his preaching, he said from the pulpit: "And now, men, go to your homes; get your picks and then come with me. Old Lisbeth is ill, and not able to dig her potatoes. Winter will soon be here. To-morrow you will all be busy at home. Let us this day complete our worship in the fields, by gathering sustenance for our old sister." This, in substance, is what he preached. It requires a rude courage to do this, for, to conventional eyes, it is a breaking of the Sabbath. But he has the true spirit of the Lord, who says, "The son of man is master of the Sabbath."

I traveled from the country where Oberlin sleeps, my heart full of these old impressive recollections.

I came to the house of a colleague who had died some days before. There were his widow and his little children. When I saw the heads of those orphans upon which the father would never again place his hand, I was filled with intense emotion.

It seemed to me that I was treading upon holy ground, and that my whole being was vibrating with the words of the ancient prophet, through whom God says: I am the Father of the orphan and the protector of the widow. It seemed to me that these little children grew great before my eyes and took on the form of giants. The more helpless they were, the more numerous appeared the invisible legions with which God defends the afflicted, and I realized the strength of those who are weak, from a worldly point of view. God was revealed to me most plainly in those little orphans of which He proclaimed Himself the father.

Another time, not long after, I found my-

self in a house where the sick are cared for. It was managed by a staff of individuals of great piety, respectability, and sympathy, scrupulous in the discharging of their duties. Among the dependents who did the coarser work, I saw one who had come there from evil ways, a poor girl who had lived elsewhere, I will not say where. The memory of her past was so poignant that she dared not lift her eyes.

This past was far behind her, however, and she had already done much in reparation. In spite of this, it seemed to me, that the rest of the household held her too much—I would not say in a state of abjection, but at least in humiliation. The remembrance of the sin she had committed appeared to me to have been kept alive by every one, to an exaggerated extent. The poor girl submitted to everything without a murmur. The rudest tasks imposed upon her were accomplished with a smile; she never rebelled. She seemed to me like a poor horse, put to the hardest labor with the least amount of fodder and regarded as a negligible quantity.

The more I looked at her, the more did her person appear surrounded by a holy light. I thought of the God who works in the depths, in the hearts of poor sinners, and creates conditions above which we must rise by the strength of our weakness. I remembered that He is greatest when we do not see Him. And I do not know why, in that house, among so much that was beautiful, venerable, and respectable from all points of view, that that which received the least consideration appeared to me the very point at which the presence of God was made manifest to my soul.

We must learn to find God in obscure corners, in the things of every day, where we have not been accustomed to see Him, outside the conventional road and guise, and, after having found Him there, recognizing Him under the garb of the slave.

When you have recovered from an illness, do not forget to thank God, but remember, also, the physician and all those who have worked and kept vigil about your bed. There

are those who are most ungrateful toward certain others, among which are the doctors and nurses. Do they not expose themselves to contagion, wait upon you, breathe the most debilitating atmosphere? That is their business, some will say, and add, what they are paid for ?

Oh ! my Brothers, what ingratitude of heart ! This is practical ungodliness, atheism in its daily blackness which we consume every day with the best appetite, as our household bread.

One is an atheist, not to the extent of never having lifted his soul and spirit to the conception of some particular God of a church or school; one is an atheist, a radical atheist, even with the most abounding creed, when one does not appreciate the sanctity of things, when one does not hear around him the resounding or murmuring of the word addrest to Moses on Mt. Horeb: Have a care! the ground upon which you tread is holy ground.

One is an atheist when the hands grow cold and heavy at the touch of that which, in this world, is frail, precious, deserving of pity or

respect. It is then that one does not love God and does not know Him, even when one chants His praises loudly. And what conclusion do we arrive at from all this? The conclusion is that we must be converted.

We must be converted, not from our exterior and superficial religion, which, in spite of its positive appearance, remains vague and is cold in the face of the noble sentiments with which it has warmed our hearts. But we must be converted to the religion of the Eternal, preached through Christ, when He said: That which you have done unto the least of my brethren, you have done unto me. He says to us: I am with these. And when you wish to find me, follow the paths which become more and more humble, leading toward dwellings more and more obscure. When you wish to find me, flee from noise and seek the quiet, shun the pomp and seek that which glitters not. It is in the dust of every day that you will find real gold, the true spirituality.

I have given you, my Brothers, a few admonitions and indications with which I have

sought to lead up to a stern message of the Evangelist. There is none more stern, but He who pronounced it, is, nevertheless, the gentlest, the best, the tenderest of all the sons of men, He who has most willingly said: "Thy sins are forgiven thee."

Heed Him, as His finger points to the goal which we must gain. Let us repent of our sins and march in that direction! For, out of the darkness, we shall come to light.

IV

THE TWO SPIRITS[1]

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.—Gal. V., 16.
If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.—Gal. V., 25.

BELOVED Brothers: We are reunited here, on a day of Whitsuntide, by a first communion, thus setting a present act of religion against a background of great tradition. We desire to establish a link between this tradition and the present time, in order that you, who are entering into the communion of the faithful, as well as you, my brothers, surrounding these children with your affection, may be refreshed at the source from whence sprang the primitive church and may hold commu nion in the Whitsuntide spirit.

This spirit is the most important thing.

[1] Sermon delivered in the Temple of Oratory of the Louvre, Sunday, June 3d, 1906, upon the celebration of first Communion.

The whole destiny of man depends upon the spirit with which he is animated. Life is either a great risk or a great promise; it is productive of shadow or sunshine, evil results or fruits of blessedness, according to the spirit in which we take it. We give you to-day in our name, in the name of all those who have preceded us in the church, following the great Chief, we give you to-day this double watch-word: Beware of the spirit of evil; attach yourselves to the spirit of good!

Beware of the spirit of evil! How may it be recognized? I will tell you.

The spirit of evil, no matter how gracious its guise, nor how ugly, how young nor how old, can be thus distinguished: it scoffs at God, the Master of Life, at His works, and at His creatures. It can be designated by a single phrase: it is the murderer, the destroyer.

God is the master of life. He loves it with a fatherly tenderness, having sown it in the black furrows of the earth broadcast over the universe, the immensity of which the mind can scarcely grasp, sown it in sorrow and in hope.

The spirit of evil attacks God's sowing. It is essentially impious and unrespecting, believing in nothing.

Oh! its incredulity and impiety do not discriminate against a particular church or dogma. It is a great error, my Brothers, and we are far from right in excluding and excommunicating for differences of catechism or church dogma, as if the friends or the enemies of God could be recognized by these signs. Important as church doctrines may be, their importance is always relative; but there is a fundamental dogma upon which all catechisms rest, upon which the entire existence and destiny of men and societies are built, and this dogma is the dogma of life. It holds that life is essentially good, that God has willed that life be raw material, gloomy and sad, from which an immortal glory can be derived.

The spirit of evil attacks this dogma, attacks it in our thoughts and in our deeds. To the spirit of evil, the object of life is pleasure or blasphemy, and the entire Universe furnishes occasion for mockery, defilement, and pro-

fanation. Neither the innocence of the child nor the pure chastity of youth, nor pensive old age, bowed down under its burdens, nor blessed poverty nor holy sorrow can find favor in its eyes.

It laughs at the wide eyes of a child, in which dimly shines some unknown confidence in the paternity of God, with a gentle faith in all that is good and pure and fine. It mocks at the enthusiasm of a youth or a maiden, when their young souls, susceptible to all that is noble, unfold in acclamation, salutation, honor, and submission, with the docility of a disciple and in filial veneration.

It sounds the note of all defects, runs the gamut of all depravity. It is irreverent, dishonest, malignant, quarrelsome, sordid. It is to life what poison is to the body, the worm to the vine, a deadly virus to vigorous blood.

It is, further, a spirit of contention, eager to seize the opportunity of setting men at variance within the circle of their family, their church, their country, their work; a spirit of negation and arrogance, of disparagement

and contempt, and also of tyranny and oppression.

God respects the human soul and forces no one, not even for his own good, whereas the spirit of evil does not permit the taking of self seriously and brooks no contradiction. Everything must give way to its commands, scruples of conscience as well as scruples of intelligence. It is the only authority.

The spirit of evil is also a spirit of terror, of petty, cringing fear. As with all tyrants in this world, in order to install itself in the place of the dethroned Eternal, it destroys the only fear which is justifiable and good—the fear of God and the fear of doing evil. And so, slaves of fear, miserable tremblers, at the mercy of every menace, we bend to the yoke all the more surely because we no longer have Him to whom we say: "Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory."

Beware of the evil spirit! Fear nothing, night, day, death, illness, nothing. At heart, nothing remains injurious forever, nothing is entirely bad; the shafts of evil will not touch

your heart if you fear the only adversary you have to fear. Behold the enemy!

It approaches you in smiling and pleasant temptations, to offer you a little pleasure in exchange for much shame, a few riches in exchange for much baseness, a little malicious laughter to the detriment of much true joy It approaches you in the guise of the comrade who teaches you evil things, or in the form of great and even respectable persons from whom you learn the vanities, the conventions, the falsehoods by which we die.

Flee from it, for, if you follow it and listen to it, it will turn your bright faces into masks and grimaces, make of your mouth an open sepulcher. It will pass over the garden of your senses, as an April moon over the hillsides, and leave but a graveyard of withered things. Finally, when you shall have obeyed it, when you shall have quitted your father and your mother, renounced all those whom you love, completed all the sacrifices, committed all the crimes of high treason, which demand that you detach yourself from human-

ity and join the ranks of its enemy, it will pay you wages worthy of itself, death.

Beware of the spirit of evil! Stifler of young hopes, assassin from the beginning, how many fresh and smiling morning blossoms has it not destroyed! How many childish hearts has it not perverted and used for the building of the dreadful pedestal, from which its omnipotence flings defiance at us!

O ancient devastator of God's gardens, corrupter and killer of souls, what other fear, what other hate can we not efface from our hearts and the hearts of our children, that there may remain place only for dread and hate of thee alone, cursed spirit, with thy works and thy power?

You will say to me: What are we that we should struggle against the ancient Titan? What are we in the face of all the defeats which men before us have suffered? Have not the majority always bowed their heads and remained silent under the tyranny of evil? Does its power not ensconce itself every day with fresh impudence? Who can prevail

against it and what are we that we should attack it?

I will tell you, my children.

You are a hope of God in the struggle against evil.

That, believe me, is your strength! The grain of wheat, carefully sorted, lovingly looked upon in the hand of the sower and then confided to the furrows of the earth is the hope of the laborer. It is the bread of the morrow, the well-being of man, the strength of the future. That laborer is God.

Every child, every human creature must regard himself as a grain in His hand. You are a hope, sown by the hand of the Eternal Himself. He who lights the sun in the east and the conscience in the depths of our souls, He who holds the world, in whose keeping sleep the dead in their beds of clay and the infants in their cradles, He who is everything in all places, has set a particular hope upon the head of every one of you, no matter how weak or how humble.

You are hopes of the Eternal. Fear noth-

ing. He will be near to defend and sustain you. But, on one condition, that you be not against Him by loving evil. To love evil is your weakness and your danger; you must be warned of that.

Evil would not be so powerful if it laid siege only from without. It is undoubtedly to be dreaded in itself, in its methods, and its weapons. But it is principally powerful because it also possesses intelligence.

Heed not! In every one of you there is a wicked advocate, who pleads the cause of evil. In every one of you, dear children, no matter how good your education, in every one of you, young men, there is an advocate, crafty, knavish, and malignant, who pleads the cause of the spirit of evil under various circumstances and admirably sustains that cause. Do not heed it!

Not only bar your door against the spirit of evil, but, above all, do not allow it a place at your hearth. For, even if the door be bolted, the enemy has the best place if he be seated at your fireside.

Beware of the evil which is in you! Do not countenance your bad habits and your doubtful inclinations; do not look with indulgence upon your defects, your sins, upon the corruption which has its place and work in each one of you. Do not encourage the darkness and the night which are always ready to envelop your spirit. Be proud of your title of human creature and child of God. Then you will have nothing to fear, for you will be on God's side.

We have been taught the doctrine of the old Adam, tainted with immemorial crimes, whose vices can be always found in his descendants. They reappear even under the most brilliant veneer of civilization. Old wounds are reopened when we dig too deeply into the composition of man.

Do not be afraid of a heredity so disturbing; the less you hold to it, the less shall the old man prevail. There is something older than the prehistoric stain; something in you, which rises above the sorriest atavism, the most pernicious heritage; it is the image of

the Eternal in the most profound depths of yourselves. Amid the rust and impurities with which humanity is encrusted is the pure metal, the primitive gold of which God has made us; there is His indelible signature which Christ, the new man, came to reveal. Upon this we must rely for the struggle against evil. We must ally ourselves with the spirit of good and the profound powers in our better selves which reveal the divine origin.

St. Paul has said: "Do you not know that you are the temple of God?" Do you not know that you are organized for the reception of the greatest strength, the most formidable power in existence, the spirit?

Power, duration, and influence obtain by what little there is of the spirit in things. Beauty itself, no matter how wonderful, is only a fringe on the mantle of the spirit and the most brilliant intelligence is only vanity when it is not blest with the spirit. Nothing is more subtle, more penetrating, more irresistible, than the spirit; and of this spirit you can be the possessor. It can transform you, ex-

pand within you, inspire you, sanctify you. Without inspiration, man is only sounding brass, an instrument without soul, a beautiful machine without steam or fuel. He may be compared to a vessel in mid-ocean which, in spite of the comfort enjoyed on board, in spite of all the labor of civilization centered in it, suddenly stops because the wind does not swell its sails or because some accident has happened to the machinery. When the spirit is lacking, everything is lacking. The most ancient and majestic church, when the spirit has fled, is nothing more than a tomb, where lost mercies and dead virtues are mourned. The finest achievement of painting, architecture, or poetry, when it contains no fervor of spirit, when it lacks that something which gives value to the word, the line, or the color, is only a magnificent monument of impotence.

We are capable of receiving the spirit. The good spirit is the spirit which loves life, clings to it as to a precious gift, and looks upon it as material from which should be derived some-

thing for the service of others and for the service of God.

Do not hold yourselves in contempt. Do not stand apart and say: I am so small a thing, I am nothing. It is the Eternal who has willed that you be this small thing; it is the Eternal who gives you, small as you are, the absolute capacity for receiving His spirit. When this spirit is received, no matter if one be rich or poor, gifted with many talents or only moderately favored, one is great by the same means, namely, by the spirit of God which has come to us. It gives value to everything; without it, everything is worthless.

Hear me when I tell you to take yourselves as you are; do not love evil, but do not despair at the thought of the evil which is in you. The spirit will purge you of evil. Regard yourselves as creatures of God. Hear the call of Him whose hope you are; let yourselves be chastised, reclaimed, and pardoned by the stern love which saves you from sin.

Then, in spite of your deficiencies and your misery, you will be cured of evil and become

good. Not only will you force yourselves to lead your own lives, cleansed of all stain, but every human being around you will seem to you infinitely worthy of respect. You will have that particular piety which traverses human society as if walking through a garden of God.

When you see a little baby, asleep in its mother's arms, when you see how tiny it is and how frail, you feel an immense tenderness in your heart because this little creature, also, is a hope of God. The spirit of good shows us the great value of all things. Instructed and guided by it, you will not only fear no one, but you will also wish to deceive no one, despise no one, ill-treat no one, take advantage of no one. You will not wish to do harm to any living being, nor to misjudge him, for the right of the Eternal is affirmed in each one. The more weak and defenseless are those with whom we meet, the more is the invisible right of the Eternal affirmed in them. Precisely because they are abandoned, defenseless, because they are lacking in the ordinary means

of defense in the world, they can say with the poet:

"But we have with us that unknown one
Whose sublime shadow can be seen at moments
Beyond the towering wall of the abyss."

In learning to walk according to the spirit, you will feel yourselves seized by a sort of religious shudder at the approach of great things, of august and venerable things, imposing their grandeur, their nobility, their antiquity upon us. But you will feel this religious shudder equally every time that you meet sorrow, affliction, and even sin, the errors, follies, and wickedness of men. You will receive the spirit of Him of whom John the Baptist said: "I baptize with water; but Another shall come after me who shall baptize you with fire and with the Holy Ghost!" And this spirit will lead you from light to light.

That the Holy Ghost might not remain inaccessible and, in spite of His prodigious reality, vague, impalpable, and invisible to our feeble gaze, the Eternal sent it in the flesh. The Eternal made it a living word which was

a man. The Eternal gave him eyes the most far-seeing, the gentlest, the best which have ever looked upon the earth. He gave Him the tenderest hands, the most delicate, the most abounding with feeling, which have ever soothed our misery. He has sent us the merciful Christ, who honors the Father and finds Him and His hopes even in the dust where those who are lost go astray and besmirch themselves; the Christ fired with such tenderness for faltering humanity that He has stooped to our depths to gather up a lost soul as one would gather up a treasure.

It is behind Him that we must march in order to march in the spirit. You do not follow a formula, a conception, an idea even the most beautiful; you follow a man. You hear the throbbing of his heart.

Christ and His spirit signify holy humanity, lofty and divine. Through Him the Spirit has visited us, has descended into our life and invested it with an imperishable interest. By this light our destiny blazes with an inconceivable splendor.

There is nothing so great as human life, nothing so inspiring, so beautiful even in its sorrows. Nothing that you may do, nothing that may be offered you in the way of superficial pleasures or the factitious glitter of worldly pomp, can equal the profound interest of real life.

You have a good Chief, my children; follow Him, attach yourselves to Him, give yourselves to Him. Then shall you realize your life and be able successfully to combat the spirit of evil.

At present, the spirit of good invites you. Covered with your white veils, young girls, and you, our dear sons, enveloped by your young thoughts as by the glow of the morning, have responded to this invitation. Yes, the spirit invites you—an honor, the measure of which no human standard can compass.

Think of the feast to which you come! You are about to communicate, that is to say, fraternize; you are about to unite yourselves, not only with your fellow beings, friends, comrades, relatives who surround and love you,

but to fraternize with them in the spirit of a family, greater than even the largest family. You are about to drink of a cup, boundless, untarnishable, where springs an unquenchable life. You are about to join yourselves to all those who for centuries have seated themselves at this table. Look into the invisible which lies opened before your eyes and reflect, in this hour, upon the purest glories of humanity, upon the merciful heroes, the patient martyrs. Think, then, of those among the departed who have loved you the best, of the loved ones who are dead, whom God has gathered in with a kiss and spared from their final suffering to place them in the light immortal.

Recount to yourself the dear ones who have gone, brothers or sisters who once embraced you, or fathers and mothers if, alas, they are not here to respond to the roll call.

Think of them all; they are here beside you. For we are not approaching a visible table where we consume a transitory thing; we are about to perform a spiritual act, to assist at an everlasting ceremony. In approaching

this table, may your heads be surrounded by the pure and beneficent host of spirits which have departed for the skies. Not only lessen the distance separating the living from the dead, but diminish that which separates you from your living brothers.

Love, be kind, be patient, forgive all sins that all sins may be forgiven you.

Be good, for goodness alone is immortal, for goodness is the fruit of the spirit.

Forgive, for forgiveness is greater than sin. It will still shine in the world, when sins shall be pardoned or the unpardonable sins shall have sunk into the abyss.

Fill yourselves with the spirit, with which, now and always, you shall be fired, and advance; and may this spirit surround and accompany you. May the Eternal who has given us the Christ, may the Christ who has given us this communion, be in our midst. And may we celebrate this first communion in the true spirit of Whitsuntide.

V

SHOW US THE FATHER

Philip saith unto Jesus, Lord, show us the Father. . . . Jesus saith unto him: Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father.—John XIV., 8, 9.

OH! Eternal of mysteries and of truth, sanctify us by Thy word; Thy word is truth. Amen!

Beloved brothers in Jesus: Show us the Father. It is a disciple who speaks; but his request is that of an apprentice, almost of a child. And it is the Master who replies.

Let us successively examine the request and the response.

"Show us the Father!" In saying this, Philip expresses, unknowingly, all the aspirations of religious humanity.

[1] Delivered Sunday, December 3, 1905, at St. Peter's in Geneva at the conclusion of the Congress of Liberal Christianity.

The great writer, Peter Rosegger, has entitled one of his books, "Der Gottsucher" ("The Seeker of God"). When he wrote this title, he used a name by which man can be designated, the complete man, deprived of none of the higher faculties and characteristics of his being. Man is a seeker of God.

We say it, first, to all nature: "Show us the Father!" And, altho our thinkers and philosophers have objected, it is none the less true that, in order to combat the error of seeking God in material nature, we are obliged to begin that way. It is wisdom itself; it is the road which God has indicated, as the one leading from the ephemeral to the eternal.

If Christ has said: Consider the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, was He not sure that a gracious message was inscribed upon the petals of those lilies? Did He not feel that every sparrow which spreads its wings is a dove from the ark, sent to humanity with a message, fragmentary, it is true, but a message from Him who is hidden behind the veil of the material world?

We must, therefore, appreciate to its full value, this search for God in nature. We must "drink of the tenderness and eat of the fear" of the creation which surrounds us, now smiling like a mother, now terrible as a monster. But whatever our solace in finding the trace of the eternal Father upon the sands of our mortal shores; whatever the charm felt, at moments, in fleeing from the noisy cities and the feverish society of men, to seek the presence of God upon the heights, in the solitude and silence of a retreat, it is none the less true that there is an ancient and gigantic struggle between the living soul and exterior nature. If this nature is, at certain times, a transparent veil, scarcely covering the figure of the Father, it becomes for us, at other times, a black and fatal wall, against which both our minds and our hearts hurl themselves. Never can humanity accustom itself to the force of its violence, nor to its dreadful impassibility when, dumb, blind, and deaf, it crushes out existence after existence and becomes a tomb, in which man is buried alive with his love, his

intellect, and his hope. The message of nature, summed up for us, is, after all, this: "Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return." Nature ends in nothingness; but man has no right to assent to his own nothingness nor to practise the resignation of the dead leaves.

When I think of the nature of that God who recounts to us at morning and repeats it at evening, when I think of His majesty and His insufficiency in satisfying our souls, I am reminded of a sad story.

One night, off the coast of Brittany, a ship was swallowed by the waves; she contained nearly all the family of the poet Le Braz and of Leon Marillier, both well known in the city of Geneva. Of all those who were on board, only one survived to die a lingering death some time after the others; this was my young friend Leon Marillier. I saw him on his sick-bed, three days after the catastrophe, his mind still possest by the vision of horror. He told me that he had been in distress for hours and hours, clinging to an oar, floating between

the calm and silent sea and the starry sky. He described to me his feelings in contemplating the serenity of the stars, the smile of that beautiful night, wearing about its throat all the jewels of the heavens and passing superbly over the waters, unmindful of the unfortunate ones struggling in the darkness. On that day I realized once more that, altho the poet has said:

> "Stars, your glances bring us to our knees,
> The call of infinity throbs beneath your long lashes"

it is no less true that between man and nature in its most wonderful forms, there is a chasm which nothing can ever bridge. Even at best, when she displays her entire beauty and tenderness, nature is but a fringe on the mantle of God. We must go as far as her heart.

In order to emerge from the cruel uncertainty of our destiny upon knowledge of the intentions of the supreme Will regarding us, in which gravitates the universe, we must have other messengers than the trees and mountains, other light than that shed by the

stars. In order even vaguely to outline the figure of the Father, another palette is required than that one whose colors are borrowed from pictures of this visible world.

Before the closed wall of the crystal skies, the old prophet cries: "Oh! if you would rend the heavens and descend among us!" This plea marks a new step in the search of God.

Do not stop at the anthropomorphism of a prayer, which invites divinity to come and dwell with us. This prayer, even in the form best adapted to our weakness, expresses none the less the fundamental law of the entire contact of man with reality. Nothing belongs to us, to be sure, except that which we adapt to our being. Everything is humanized in filtering through the soul of man. The rocks which we see against the horizon, the light which we contemplate, become humanized when we regard them. God likewise was obliged to make Himself man, in order to be understood by men. The part of the world where God is nearest is in the soul of a

man fired by His spirit. My brothers, we are imprisoned, altho free, in the cage of our destiny, within the limits of our knowledge, and divinity will never become accessible and assimilable until it reaches our innermost being. It was not abasement for God to descend to us. It was only an added grandeur. He alone can, at the same time, dwell in the "inaccessible light" and remain "close to wounded hearts."

It is not, therefore, a truth of a time, nor of a people, but of all time, which Christ proclaimed to His disciple, who wished to see the Father, when He gave Him His lofty answer. He affirms in substance: What have I done since I came among you, if I have not shown you the Father? Look at me, Philip! By the mysterious grace accorded me, I am the legible transcription of the impenetrable hieroglyphic of invisible reality for the eyes of men. Look at me! Through my eyes the Father smiles upon you, judges you, and forgives you your sins! Through my heart, the Father sends you His message of love;

by my words He calls you, and by my hand He clasps you.

Do not think, my brothers, that there lies, in this declaration of Jesus, some monstrous and blasphemous exaggeration of the "I," limited to His own personality. No, there are two ways of saying "I." The one contains all that is impure, selfish, and, at the same time, exclusive and strictly individual in our nature. In it can be found the soul of the competitor, the desire to be apart and unique; that is the inferior "I." But there is a higher "I," embodying that which brings us closer to our brothers, that which the Father has given us, that which we possess of the divine. It is of this "I" that Christ speaks when He says: Those who have seen me have seen the Father. He has never aspired to an exclusive and jealous royalty, by which to dominate His brothers, measuring His own majesty with their unworthiness. He has always united Himself with others, always identified Himself with the higher humanity, in the rigid partnership of Chief and man. In His im-

personal self are assembled the resources from above and the aspirations of men, as in the vine are centered all the roots coming from the earth and all the tendrils reaching out toward the heavens. The mysterious line of the horizon, where meet the waves and sky, where, at moments, one can not distinguish the blue of the sea from the azure of the sky, admirably symbolizes His being. God and man are met in it; God has visited His people. We have looked upon a human God, a divine Humanity.

The unworthy forms, under which men formerly feared and honored God, fade before this revelation of a new Being. The powers of envy and cruelty have retreated to the shadows. The stars of those Olympian gods, quaffers of ambrosia, revellers, seated in the everlasting light while man weeps and toils in the darkness, have waned. A God, suffering and militant, a God, working in our mortal flesh, weeping our tears, joining in our struggles, full of pity for our sins and our sorrows, a God, lying beside us in the grave, that He

may lessen its gloom; this is the Father who appeared to us in the soul of Jesus, as the blue vault of heaven is reflected in a well.

However, my brothers, notwithstanding the amplitude and profundity of this truth, we do not wish to dwell too long upon it. Let us hasten toward the practical conclusions, according to the example set us by the Master.

Christ has always pushed on to action. We must not delay to use the mystic wings beneath the infinite vault, nor to speak of the highest, the holiest, the most quickening realities. We must drink at the fountain-head, eat of the bread of life, and fulfil the will of the Father.

There remains but one more step to consider in the revealing of God to man, but it is the most important one, for it relates to our personal responsibility. When Christ made His declaration to Philip, He added: He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do. What does this mean if not that we, also, are called upon to show the Father?

Alas, before describing in what luminous fashion the weakest and smallest of us can show the Father, we must, at first, paint a dark background to a picture sparkling with light.

Man can work at two kinds of revelation, the light and the dark. We can all be either messengers of the night or of the day.

Men, by their evil actions, have filled the world with darkness. Every morning, when we begin our work, we can be workers of iniquity, creators of shadow, sowers of darkness.

If you dispute among yourselves, even about lofty things, about religious subjects, for example, you veil the face of the Father. If you exclude and excommunicate one another, sinning against the brotherhood, you veil the face of the Father. If, selfishly enjoying your wealth, your health, or even your virtues, you think that the earth and all that it contains have been offered to you in homage, as if to a king, if you never give a thought to your brothers who hunger, who weep, who stray and sully themselves, you veil the face of the Father.

"When little children, their hands red with cold,
Gather from under your feet the crumbs of the feast,
The eyes of the Lord are turned from you."

Every time you lie, every time you play the hypocrite, profane, impure, and craven; whenever your heart is not in your words nor your deeds in accord with your inmost thoughts, you veil the face of the Father.

Let us not think of others in listening to this, let us think of ourselves, men of religion or professing to be. If there is so much obscurity of soul in the world, impressions of blankness and despair, so profound an ignorance of God, does not the fault lie, first and foremost, with the appointed champions of religion? For if, as you, with reason, often repeat, there exist exceptional atheists, who, by their goodness, their simplicity, and their uprightness, make men believe in God, there are, also, too many men of religion, who, by their spirit of cunning, their avarice, their refinements, their hypocritial prayers and songs which are lies, create a doubt of God. Nay, they make Him hated, according to the terri-

ble word of the apostle: It is because of you that the name of God is blasphemed among the heathen.

Sometimes, when I am particularly struck by this dark aspect of things, by all the shadows with which man has obscured the figure of God, by all the unclean stains which our lips have left upon the holy Name, it seems to me that the Eternal says to us: Do not ever speak my Name again, it is too sullied, and too much violence has been done in the world under cover of it. Sit down in silence, in sack-cloth and ashes, be good and simple and true. Be men, be brothers. In poverty unite your sorrows; if you have talents or riches use them in the service of others. You talk too much; be silent and love! Then shall I appear amid the silence, for it is my favorite domain; I shall appear in your poverty, for in poverty I can be rich. Even at the dark cross-roads of doubt, when you know not by which path to seek me, if you will stretch out your hands in brotherly love, I shall be more surely among you than when you multiply the vain

ceremonies of a devotion which your actions belie.

That we, by our actions, are the messengers of the Father, is a fact of which we occasionally receive startling testimony.

The week which has just passed opened upon that great and bloody scandal which, for so long, has convulsed the extreme East and, little by little, has overspread the entire horizon of the civilized world with its sinister gleam. To-day we celebrate the first Sunday after the suspending of that war by the courage of one man, who is more than the President of a great Republic, a child of God in simplicity and in truth. When this step of intervention became known, we were struck by its boldness. Such was the nature of the obstacles presented, that they seemed impossible to surmount. During many days, the superhuman struggle fluctuated, leaving us between hope and fear.

But, in the end, the smiling light of peace dawned. The impossible was realized.

Did it not seem to you, that day, that the

sublime Unknown, the Father, whom none can wholly express nor comprehend, had been among us, working through the intermediary of a man of good faith? As the bells of Portsmouth pealed and, through all America and all civilized peoples, the Hosanna of peace rang out, did you not feel the spirit of a better future spreading through the air? In such circumstances we grasp the purport of the prophesy of Jesus: The works that I do shall you do also, and greater works than these shall you do. If you believe in God, believe also in Me. To believe in Christ is to believe God in man; it is, in consequence, to believe also in ourselves, in that which God is able to do for us. For the honor of God is set upon our heads. High and holy humanity shall one day be the justification for the responsible author of this world.

Let us believe in our work, in our future, in the humblest efforts of our children's hands, it is thus that we can prove to the Eternal who made us, that we believe in Him. He who does not see God in man, will see Him no-

where. He who does not believe in humanity, who has no faith in the black furrow in which we sow our lives to reap the fruits of immortality, destroys, by this fundamental incredulity, the foundation upon which all the moral universe rests and destroys faith in God itself. The religious pessimist who admits a distant future, where all wrongs shall be redressed, but who does not believe in man or that God will in the end purify this world in accomplishing His will, this pessimist, no matter how religious, shatters the columns upon which securely rests the faith of the living God. A positive check of the human scheme would be a defeat of God.

Hear Christ repeating to us: If you believe in God believe also in me, and by our faith in Him, establish confidence in ourselves. Let no one accuse of pride that which is the true doctrine of salvation and all liberating action. Has Jesus not said: I am the vine and you the branches; you can do nothing without me. And all of us who live by His spirit know to what extent this comparison is just. But

then, why not appropriate it in its full scope? Have you ever thought of what would become of the vine, if it had no branches? The branches can do nothing without the vine; the vine can do nothing without the branches. To all children of men God Himself says: I have need of thee to reveal me to thy fellows, for precisely this I have called thee by thy name. Be my eyes for the contemplation of sorrow, be my hands for the touching of those who stray, and in such measure as thou shalt permit me to reveal my holy will through thy actions thou also shalt see me.

Hear, dear brothers, companions in misery and hope, hear what one of your number has wished to say this morning, in the midst of your sympathetic silence, happy in being once more able to lift his voice in this fine old city of Geneva, where he has always met with such brotherly sympathy. What happy news to tell in the company of poor sinners, but sinners of whom every one represents a hope of God and whom Christ has found worthy of dying for! In the presence of such realities,

may the most afflicted among us, the most bent with sorrow, those who have often felt themselves forgotten and from whom the face of the Father seemed veiled, may they be restored and strengthened! May they depart from this house, their hearts warmed by contact with the eternal Heart. I would wish that, imbued and comforted by the mighty power contained in the phrase: "He who has seen me hath seen the Father," we should never again lose courage in any situation, even the most desperate, and that the promise of Jesus should be fulfilled in us: He who believes in me, the stream of the water of life shall flow in his breast. Amen.

VI

THE RELIGION OF THE PAST AND THE RELIGION OF THE FUTURE

YESTERDAY was All-Saints' Day. Today, we celebrate the feast of the Reformation. The meeting of these two feasts is not without significance. One can see in the latter a retort to the former saying: "And we also have our Saints!" Some, evidently, understand it in this way. To the saints of Catholicism, they oppose the heroes of the Reformation.

These last-named are certainly strong enough to bear all the comparison. But behind this association of ideas lurks a great moral danger. It awakens a spirit of opposition, of contest, and of pride. The possessive

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adjectives, with the accent emphasized, are they not misplaced here? Do the genuine saints and authentic heroes belong to a party? Do they not belong to all mankind, as do the great geniuses? We do them an injustice, in considering them products which one part of the human family uses for the eclipse of the other. St. Chrysostom, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Bernard, St. Augustine are ours. They also are of the noble and solemn procession of our spiritual ancestors. And Luther, does he not also belong to Catholics? They no longer avail themselves of him. As for me, I love the saints, especially the nameless, obscure, and forgotten ones, those who have no day set aside for them in the calendar. And if this word "saint" offend you, I will willingly admit that there are no saints, since we are all poor sinners, saved only by faith and divine grace. On the other hand, you must grant, in return, that there are saints nevertheless. For, to these of the earth's children, fallible like us and allotted to certain tasks, humanity owes so much gratitude that we can

well give them a title apart. They do not claim it. They are indifferent to glory, and moreover, their image is worth more than the halo with which we surround them and which will fade. But it is we who must elevate and honor them. Nothing is more instructive to the old race of Adam, too inclined to disparage, than legitimate gratitude and well-placed admiration.

Guard piously, therefore, the memory of these, whoever they may be, who, in traversing these dark and tortuous paths, have scattered light. All-Saints' Day and the feast of the Reformation have this in common; they are both days of remembrance. And this leads us to meditation upon the place which remembrance holds in the religious world.

Amid the immeasurable richness of soul which admits religion, there are two contrasting elements to point out: remembrance, turned toward the past; the prophetic spirit, looking to the future.

The balance between these two is the very condition of a normal religious life. Should

one of them lessen, the proportions would be disturbed and serious results might ensue.

Let us first discuss remembrance. This word is as sweet to the ear as the distant church bells which lulled us in our youth. It is one of the most harmonious expressions of the language and of a meaning particularly human. Memory is one of the proper tokens of our nature. Our lower brothers, the animals, have only one form of restraint; a good and tenacious individual memory. We have seen faithful dogs, still mourning for a master already forgotten by men, and poor, ill-treated brutes revenging themselves on their tormentors, after a considerable lapse of time. But animals do not possess a collective memory. Where is their history? It is imprinted upon their inherited instincts, but not on their conscious memory.

The memory, prolonged beyond present and contemporary life, the long historical regard of the ages dead and gone, is solely a human phenomenon.

And in this profound remembrance, what

treasures! Without it, what would we be? Mere nonentities, reduced to impotence, to the everlasting marking of time.

All national inheritance, all art, all science, all religious tradition is a trust confided to memory, guarded and perpetuated by it.

Unfortunate are the families who have no memories, in which the recollection of the beloved dead has faded! Unfortunate those who forget, the societies, lay or religious, which have not recognized the strength, the purport, the rôle of educator played by ancient and venerable traditions! They are like ships without ballast.

But memory, like many other good things, can deviate from its goal, occupy an exaggerated position, overstep the just bounds of its salutary functions in order to acquire a place which does not belong to it. Then, in place of being a power, it becomes a tyranny.

This is what happens every time the balance between the influence of memory and delving into the future ceases to exist. For reasons easily understood,—an acquired power

of rapidity, a tendency to continue in the state in which one finds one's self, services rendered and gratitude, logical prudence and selfish calculation,—for good reasons and bad (and God knows that the bad are more effectual than the good) the balance is governed by the old propensity of leaning to the side of memory.

In the religious world we can prove this declaration without fear. Most religions which have existed or still exist have, as characteristic, an abnormal predominance of memory.

Man has a natural inclination to rest on his laurels, to live on his reputation. Position once assured, the period of ambition and struggles ended, one establishes oneself as a man of means. One lives in one's past, with jealous care in defending acquired rights and with a marked aversion to all change. Men of means love tranquillity. The noise, the novelty, the hum of toil, and the inherent spur to wholesome activity fill them with dread. They are quite content, and so ask why change

anything so comfortable? This peaceful frame of mind can inspire in them unjust sentiments, a hatred of progress, and of even just innovations; it can, in the spirit of preservation, lead them on to employ dubious and merciless methods. Such men, awakening at night with a start, shoot through the window at random, and, through foolish fear of robbers, kill harmless passers-by. The influence of this exaggerated spirit of preservation has everywhere produced the same excesses and defects. The life of the individual is consumed with it, as is the social and religious life.

Every religion is unceasingly menaced in its ideal inheritance, its devotees, its believers and priests, its customs, tenets and institutions.

It is menaced by that calamity which I shall call "the traditional ankylosis." Here is the diagnosis: the patient has a sluggish and imperfect circulation, drowsiness overcomes him, an invisible dust descends upon him, slowly burying him, and rust corrodes his organs. With eyes half-closed, seated in the twilight,

he watches the rays of the setting sun fading on the horizon.

Down there, in the vanished days, enveloped in a transparent cloud, down there is the divine, there is the source of life, there are the miracles; down there are the tracks of God imprinted upon the dust.

But, as the dream takes wing toward the golden age and the lost Paradise, the shadows descend little by little. The setting suns give way to the twilight. And, in this twilight, men submit to the exclusive sway of memory, feeling themselves invaded by twilight thoughts, twilight fears, twilight vices. For if the institutions, where ancient traditions hold sway without counterbalance, offer a quiet and rather selfish retreat for self-confident and dormant souls, they will eventually become a haunt of cunning exploiters of this same self-confidence. These are the twilight jackals.

About the slumbering figure of the old master, young appetites awaken and ill-use the servants of the household if they are not watched. Every one indulges his fancy in

hypocrisy. Only let appearances be saved! That is the peace of the grave and its disintegration!

But young liberties, aspirations toward better things, are stifled as dangers and disgrace.

And meanwhile, what becomes of thee, poor humanity, thou who sufferest, bleedest from thy wounds, wanderest in the night? Thou who hungerest and thirstest?

Thou art forgotten. Thy guardians sleep, thy cisterns are cracked, thy prophets are mute; thy holy books speak in dead languages and the ark gives forth no more oracles.

But the vast danger of the rule of exaggerated preservation is that it provokes blind reaction. Before the colossus of tradition, overspreading everything with its shadow, encumbering and blocking the roads to the future, the spirit of revolt and destruction arises. When excess has reached its summit, a cry is raised and spread abroad, a cry of hate and of death—abolition, suppression, demolishment, annihilation! Humanity has more passions than wisdom. We see it, vacillating, the slave

of impulse, from century to century, between a spirit of blind preservation and one of brutal subversion. From torpor to epilepsy, such is the heart-rending formula of so many national histories and so much fruitless agitation in the State, as well as in the Church.

Normal reactions, which were just, as well as persevering, have, at all times, been rare, but all true progress comes from them alone.

In our past religions there have been three great movements, to which have been attached all efforts toward freedom, all aspirations toward a more immediate faith and a richer life. These are: The Prophets, the Evangelists, the Reformation.

The Prophets were to the Levites and the priests what Christ was to the Scribes and Pharisees, the Reformation to the clerical and scholastic deformity of Christianity. We take the greatest interest in recalling these movements and in connecting them with one another. They are inseparable. All three are characterized by an even balance between the religion of the past and the religion of the

future. All three can be defined by this declaration of Jesus: I am come, not to destroy but to complete. Completion, that is the formula of spiritual equilibrium, the thread of gold passing between these two sad extremes; preservation without discernment, destruction without reason.

Completion, that is the true end of life, like the life of the mighty oak, rooted in the deep soil of tradition, spreading out its branches to the sky, rejuvenating, every year, its green old age with new verdure. It offers us a symbol of stability in progress, of perseverance in the same work of evolution.

Those fierce guardians of immovable tradition, the fanatical partizans of clericalism, monopolies, and petty states, consider those who come to complete the work as destroyers. And certainly, before justice can arrive and truth be manifest, many obstacles, long considered as inviolate monuments, must disappear. But they are not contradictors and destroyers, those pioneers of the religion which looks ahead. They are, on the contrary, the

true preservers. But preservers of the metal, not of its rust; of gold, not of dross; of the spirit of traditions, not of the rubbish of routines under which the best traditions are buried.

Look at the prophets, look at Christ, all bruised by the forces of tradition. And yet, no one ever had a deeper traditional root. Look also at those whom this day brings more particularly to our attention, the reformers. They were persecuted as infidels and schismatics. The truth is that they were animated by an extraordinary family feeling and an immense love of their Church. What did they want? that the Church be converted back to its original source. Who are their masters, their initiators? the Fathers of the Church, the Apostles, the whole series of founders of an institution, turned from its purpose and from its reason for existing.

Their antagonists present them as workmen without a warrant, erring individuals, born of yesterday, without ancestry, without pious respect.

But who has ever had a more imperious vocation, a more illustrious lineage, a more filial spirit?

Who was it that supported Luther in the midst of his first isolation? From whence came his strength, his astonishing resource? In what mold was his backbone cast that it could support all the pressure of the social hierarchy of his time and bear upon its shoulders the formidable weight of those two halves of God, the Pope and the Emperor? It was the living God, the Eternal Spirit who called him, fortified and sustained him. But what human means did the divine action employ? By what visible machinery was the unseen succor made manifest? Who were the masters of these masters of the regained Evangelist?

They were the ancients among the most ancient. They were Esau and Habakkuk, making themselves preceptors of a persecuted monk, St. Paul offering him his spiritual armor, Jesus calling to him across the span of fifteen centuries, with the words of eternal life.

Venerable and authentic tradition, that which is most enduring in the soul of the past, breathed upon their souls. The dead, who are living, spoke to the pioneers of the future when these organizers of a new world found only shackles, opposition, and anathema among the living who were dead.

They have behind them all the press of religious centuries. And as the archer winds his bow to bend it, so do they wind themselves on tradition to dart into the future.

To estimate the creative work of the Reformation, to measure it in the midst of contrasting judgments, the height of the walls which it has built in the city of to-day, it is sufficient to consider the prodigious sum of living forces which it has caused to spring up in the world. That which is worth while is that which vivifies.

In the epoch immediately preceding, humanity was given over to anguish of soul, fear of God, terrors of purgatory, and an unheard-of superstition. We read of a religion of gloom and of death, producing abjection in

the best, fear of living and being happy, asceticism in homicidal forms. In others, it produced levity, hypocrisy, disorder, an absolute lack of ideals and fervor. For all maladies engender their own miasma, those of the soul as well as the others. One will never find in history a more striking proof of this truth than that man does not live by genuflections, routine asceticism, strict observance of an exterior discipline, nor articles of belief learned by heart.

All this can rigorously enforce them to certain outward customs, respectable, and, above all, regular, but this is not sustaining. Even at best, this collection of petty practises and petty forms can never in the end replace the true moral qualities, which have their root in a conscience fed by the living sources of pure and complete humanity. In the midst of the greatest luxury of traditional religion, spiritual famine, insipidity or immorality can disrupt a religious society. How could it be otherwise?

When, during a cycle of generations, custom has failed to provide, to go to the root of

things, to commune with the living God and genuine humanity, when the world lives by artificiality, by repetitions, it will end by possessing a second-hand religion, a second-hand morality, a procurative faith. Then positive and spontaneous sanctity will take wing to make way for a plagiarism of sanctity beyond expression. The life of men degenerates into a faint copy in place of being an original work. Thought runs aground upon scholasticism. The joy of living and the desire to live alike perish. Worn with fatigue, dejected, a prey to mournful discouragements, humanity broods upon the end of the world.

The Reformation has reopened the sealed fountains. It has said to men: To become a man, have the courage of your true stature, your true heart! Think for yourself. Arise from your ashes, from your darkness, from your terror, from your grave! Consider that your sorrow is your greatness and bring yourself to speak with God, without witness and without interpreter.

A new ideal of human life, a new concep-

tion of God, this is what is inscribed among the assets of the Reformation.

It can well be said: We all have the same God, and it is true. The poor fetish himself does not worship God. It is not his fetish who gives him life, loves him, and governs his destiny: but the living God whom he does not know. Everybody has, in reality, only one God, for there is only one, and in Him, for Him, and by Him are all things.

But, at the same time, one strangely deceives one's self in saying: "We have all the same God." Nothing is more erroneous. Behind this solitary word "God" lie the most varied conceptions. In regarding it closely, we worship very different divinities. There are gods which exterminate and gods which create, gods which disseminate darkness and gods which spread light; inhuman gods, ferocious and horrible, and gods who are fair, benevolent, full of love and reviving goodness.

The God of the Prophets is not the same as the god of incense, of sacrifices, of temples built by the hand of man.

The God of Jesus is not the same God whom the Pharisee addrest when he made his prayer, glowing with the superb contentment of men.

The God of the hearth, of the cradle, of youth and of joy, the God of obscure and humble duties accepted by the mother of a family, the God who forges with the smith, toils with the miner, labors with the laborer, and sings in the fields with the sower, is not the God of secret sacrifice, of the hothouses of sanctity where sickly flowers are grown.

The God of the resounding mountains, of the winds, of independence, of the unbridled waves, the God who made the wing for flight and the soul for liberty, is not He to whom one offers, in sacrifice, the poor broken wings of a mutilated thought.

It is indeed a new ideal of humanity, a new figure of God, which the Reformation has revealed to us. In that lay its labor for the future.

What shall we do for the honoring of such ancients?

Shall these pioneers have, for descendants, generations in the rear guard? No. One does not do honor by copying. That which they demand is an advance guard. Can we not humbly do for our time what they so grandly did for theirs? They fed their time, reopened the granaries of plenty in the Bible and in experience, renewed the incentives to love life and labor, created forms of good hitherto unknown, transformed education, rejuvenated the will so well, that, since then, history marches with factors unknown at first and forever indestructible. Our duty is marked out by these great examples. We will go on, therefore, upheld by their memories and the memories by which they were upheld. But like them, we will march under the standard of a hope. Along the road to completion, each stage has its own work.

Under pain of compromising the spiritual heritage transmitted, we must find the actual, present, and contemporaneous form of the eternal Word.

In a dispute with Eck, Luther was fre-

quently seen to smell a bunch of flowers which he carried. In the presence of a scholastic person, they inspired him with life. He was also frequently seen interrogating butchers and all sorts of artizans, in order to gather from their lips popular expressions of the day which were capable of conveying the Word of God from the Hebrew into a living language. What minuteness, what fidelity! How, by such proceedings, does the majesty of religion incline to the personality of man and seek contact with his spirit, in order to make itself understood! To make mankind enduring, the old truth must be reborn from age to age in the consciences of new generations. Truth which nourishes souls is like bread; there is no age capable of making bread for all the ages. To be fresh, palatable, and clean, it must be cultivated by the sweat of the brow, in the fields of the present. And yet from what distance the seed comes which supplies the young harvests. And what symbol of a living tradition is more wonderful than seed!

Ah! the bread! But I feel our cruel inanition more deeply in speaking of that which nourishes souls. Was mankind ever more weary, more lacking in resource! Who will give it bread that it may eat? One of our poets has sung:

> "I for a little love would give my life.
> I give it for nothing without love!"

Of what was he thinking? Of something quite banal, perhaps. But I take up his cry. I, for a little good and strengthening thought, for a bit of true bread of the soul to give to sorrowing mankind, would give my life. And if this bread does not exist, I will give it for nothing.

But this bread does exist, let us be quite sure of that, and we too will cultivate ours under the sun which has seen so many fair harvests ripen! Shall we then be reduced to the leavings of the feast of the ancients? Unhappy last-comers in a stunted world, shall only the débris of a once bounteous repast be offered us?

Upon the parched banks of the torrents of

life, shall we have no other resource than to say to ourselves: That is where the sacred water rolled its flood? No, we will not have that. That would be to declare the spirit, which bloweth where it listeth, bankrupt. We will not die in that desert. We will live by our faith and we will live by our labor, as our fathers did, as our children will do, fulfilling the perpetual law of life, which consists in never stopping, never returning, nor secluding ourselves, but in reaching out toward future accomplishments, upheld by the most solid conquests of the past.

VII

THE WEEDERS

The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?
But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest.—Matt. XIII., 28–30.

MY Brothers: The plague of agriculture and gardening is the evil weed. It would be easy to cultivate the fields were it not for that invisible enemy which is everywhere present, following the sower of good seed with great care and insistence. The sower of good seed is a man who does not spare his toil. He must rely upon his perception to insure the quality of his seed, to prepare carefully his ground, and valiantly to turn it.

But, when he has finished his laborious day and turned homeward to enjoy a well-earned

rest, his enemies arise. In the soil through which the plow and harrow have passed, and which he has sifted to the best of his ability, are hidden seedlings which he has not noticed and which await their hour. The wing of the winds has blown seeds away unheeded by him, and these seeds grow better than those which are tended.

And soon the laborer sees, in his field, the tares growing up among the wheat. Must he not protect himself? Yes, he must begin to clear his field, when the unseen seed of evil has grown to a visible weed. Weeding is a part of agriculture. If you do not weed your vineyard or your field you are lost. The good and self-respecting laborer and the wine-grower recognize this by their proper managing of their estates. Every one has his forte.

However, too much weeding is injurious, especially at the wrong moment when the wheat is already in blossom, as our text says. It also happens sometimes that, by some slip, in plowing your garden or your field, you come upon the good grain on top and the weeds

underneath. There are also people, our own children for example, who believe they are doing right in weeding after their own fashion, but who do not distinguish the good from the bad.

And it is at this point that the lesson of Christ intervenes. This is not meant, you understand, as a lesson in ordinary agriculture, but a transferring of the lessons of nature to the moral domain, the realm of the ideal. It is the warning against unseasonable weeding, pretentious, ignorant. It is a warning for every man, whatever his ability and perspicacity.

In the domain of the spirit, the means are lacking for distinguishing the tares from the wheat, always and everywhere. It is therefore time to dispense with that operation of weeding, so largely practised, so energetically recommended and harshly carried out through the history of the world and of the Church. The province where the innermost convictions of men develop is here particularly recommended to our respect.

I have never read this text, decisive and truly categorical, tolerating neither doubt nor exception, without great sadness, a sadness provoked by the impossibility of men ever seeing the evidence. Several lines before, it says: "They have eyes, and see not; they have ears and hear not."

The word upon which we are about to reflect is a manifest proof of this. Here is a parable which contains categorical instruction; a parable which is the unfolding of a banner, a banner of respect for the ideas of others, even if they should appear in a form which seems to us dangerous and bad. This is the formula of liberty of conscience.

Those who heard the disciples, the contemporaries of the Master, the witnesses of His lesson, and to whom that lesson was expounded in all intimacy with the most circumstantial evidence, did not understand it. This operation of weeding, from which man must stay his hand because he can only do it badly and must leave it to God, they made their first duty.

When the Master had departed, they began by weeding their own Church, their little ecclesiastical venture. They weeded out St. Paul; they made his life so difficult, in the bosom of the college of ancient apostles, that he departed among the heathen, to preach to them a gospel which, for his colleagues, was a scandal, and to initiate them into a freedom which the twelve authentic successors of Christ did not admit.

The successors of the disciples weeded in their turn and set about perfecting the implements of weeding. The lesson of the cross should have stopt them.

Was not Christ Himself torn from the garden of Israel, as a rank weed, and did He not wither on the pillory of Calvary? That is something to make the boldest weeder hesitate. But look; they always had eyes and saw not. It is in prevision of these mistakes that Christ had it in His heart to give His lesson against these pluckers of the tares, who plunder the fields and impoverish the wheat. These workers of evil have existed always.

Before Christ, in the antiquity of Israel, the weeders, with their merciless tools, sought the roots of the prophets. With what obstinate fury were they plucked from the nation's soil! And they were the best.

Ah! When one begins to cleanse in this manner, one does it thoroughly. The tares are carefully separated from the wheat; then the tares are kept and the wheat is set aside.

Later, in history, look at the collection of evil weeds which the Church has scrupulously torn from her gardens; look at the plants against which she has systematically hunted, which she has never supported in any way, which she has followed with fire and sword, which she has vowed to exterminate; these are the most precious and beneficial herbs which ever grew in any garden. Among the heretics which have been imprisoned, burned, stoned, drowned, strangled, curst, are found some of the gentlest and bravest, the most believing and most intelligent among the children of God.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries

there sprang up in Europe, from different sides, a plant, until that time unknown in the gardens of religion. This plant flourished in the atmosphere of the new time. It could have replenished the old exhausted soil of the holy gardens. But the weeders were watching. They made such furious war against it and, particularly in France, tore up the national soil so deeply in order to pluck it out, that the public spirit of that country has been warped for centuries by the brutality of the operation. There is not one honest man who, applying his conscience and his reason to the questions of history, does not agree to this today. Oh! the weeders! And what harm they have done to our people!

The plants, torn by them from our national soil, have been, among distant peoples, the object of a careful culture which has put them at the head of civilization.

One might think that the Protestants, victims of this bloody weeding, would have turned in disgust from this manner of procedure. Not at all! In the Protestant Church they

weeded among themselves, so human is the instinct in an inferior and horrible humanity. It is not the vice of any particular religion. It is an instinct in us of the primitive man who understands nothing of the works of the spirit.

Our fathers weeded among themselves so fiercely that their operations went as far as shedding blood. The Calvinists weeded out the Lutherans, and the Lutherans the Calvinists. They all interpreted the Bible, read it, and expounded it, and, in the Bible, interpreted, read, and expounded this parable of the Master: "Do not root up, let both grow together!" But on this point they had eyes which saw not and ears which heard not. Still, nothing more conforms to the spirit of Christ, and of humanity revived by Him, than this formlua: "Let both grow together until the harvest."

Natural man admits of no contradiction, any more than does the wild bird in the woods admit that his fellow dwells in the same light as he. He pursues him, harries him, attacks

him, and ends by destroying him or being himself destroyed. The natural man appropriates to himself a province of thought and belief as the beast of prey considers a certain district of the desert his own particular domain and allows no other beast of prey to trespass upon it. He goes at the foe tooth and nail, until one or the other is vanquished! The natural man, in his blindness, in his combativeness, unillumined by the wisdom from above, has a horror of contradiction, and eagerly professes that God Himself holds it in horror. The contradictor is the enemy. He who affirms that which we deny merits extinction. And yet, wisdom should teach us, as we penetrate to the inner domain of life, that it is no longer by the ferocity of combat and by exclusion that the progress of life is established, but by the agreement and cooperation of opposites.

The more elevated the domain, the more it permits of the cooperation, not only of diverse functions, but sometimes of opposing forces which succeed in balancing and adjusting

themselves. The harmony and equilibrium of the entire universe exist only by opposing forces balanced in it, and which end by harmonizing with each other. Contradiction is of a providential order.

Christ, when He came into the world, understood this fundamental law. He has tried everywhere, in the social domain, to make men understand that their interests were the same, no matter what their caste; that, being brothers by a common origin, they should fraternize in their aims. He tried to teach the concentration of human forces, at a time when the most learned were employed in abusing each other, hating each other, thinking that the destruction of one was the salvation of the other, and that the glory of one was founded upon the slavery, the abjection, the annihilation of the other.

In place of this law, which is war to the death, having for its motto, "You or I, only one of us can survive," Christ has established another law, in the light of which He made it clear, He who sees farther than our short-

sighted antagonisms, that the adversary can become the best of allies.

He goes very far in this direction, so far, indeed, that the prudence of His disciples, even the most just, has never wished to follow Him. Our wisdom has always considered His as folly, and it was inevitable; for if, on the one hand, the heart of man conceals a native ferocity toward a contradictor, it contains, on the other hand, a fear of liberty. And this fear makes us more ferocious than we would otherwise be by nature. A startling doctrine looms upon the horizon, immediately men take alarm and ask themselves: "What is going to happen? What will become of us, if these things can be said, if they can be printed, taught, and freely circulated in the face of heaven?" Let it be understood here that I do not speak of inoffensive and platonic novelty, but of doctrines notoriously subversive and pernicious, of doctrines comparable, in all truth, to that seed of the Devil, of which Christ speaks. He could say nothing stronger, to characterize a plant worthy of

destruction, than to declare: "it is the sowing of the Devil." When this is said, all is said.

And then He, the just, who is exactly the contrary of that which we understand by the Devil; He, who came to combat the works of the evil spirit to the death, to combat them everywhere, in the hearts of men as well as in the exterior world, said this: "Let both grow together." Therefore, let the wheat and the seed of the Devil grow together. He thus establishes as a law, that which our ordinary prudence considers as the abomination of desolation, an intolerable coexistence of the good and the bad. And yet it is He who has said it. But His word has been found paradoxical, so much so that it has been pretended that He did not say it, or that He meant something entirely different from what He said.

There is nothing more marvelous or more melancholy than this impotence of the Evangelist to make Himself understood. When Christ makes the clearest statement, the most impossible to misunderstand, one says: "He

did not wish to say that, He could not have said it."

Yesterday even, I opened an old and venerable volume, the thickest I have in my library; it was an old German concordance, in which I always look up the different passages where the same things are spoken of.

Apropos of our text to-day, it says: "The Lord has wished to forbid extermination by force of subjects of conscience. He has wished to oppose violent destruction, the condemnation to death of heretics, but not their exclusion from the Church." As if a commentary on the blazing clearness of this text were necessary! Here is a field; it contains tares and wheat, and Christ says: "Let them grow together." If speaking means anything, this means that we must not tear out, nor even exclude or transplant elsewhere, but let all grow together.

Oh! The weeding! And to say that that continues! There are weeders to-day everywhere, in all spheres. When certain ones have weeded a long time the others say:

"Now it is our turn to weed." Thus it transpires that men employ their best efforts and the fairest inspirations of their spirit, purely and simply in preventing the growth of each other.

But if the words of our text apply to real tares, they apply still more strongly to those particular cases where men should hesitate to use violence, being unable to distinguish between tares and wheat.

I often recall a certain article in a foreign journal. It was the discourse of a man who speaks often and in a lofty strain. In it he compared himself to a gardener and he compared the nation to a great tree attacked by worms. These worms, according to him, were certain social sects. He, the gardener, considered himself called by God and the interests of the nation to rid the national tree of its pest.

Several days later, in another journal, and by way of reprisal, I saw the gardener himself compared to a sleek worm and the most pernicious with which a tree could be infested.

Consequently the gardener himself would appear to be the worm to be destroyed. From this, I shall draw this conclusion: "One is always the worm of some one."

This is what Christ felt and what He knew. That is the reason, for those who understand His spirit and seek to live with that particular clearness of soul which illumines the path of men and their hearts, that Christ is neither an ancestor nor a contemporary, but a man of the future, of a future so distant that we can scarcely imagine it.

He foresaw things incomprehensible, not only to His time, but things having a reality which we have not yet grasped. Witness this formula: "Let them both grow together." If a faint glimmer of dawn appears in our hearts at this thought, it glows but feebly. But day breaks, little by little. In spite of all the weeders, ideas are on the march.

There are countries in which it has come to be understood that the fear of liberty is a wrong fear and that one must have confidence in liberty. In these countries one is no longer

compelled to prevent good under pretext of destroying evil.

The sacrifice is made of letting plants which are considered venomous grow, and later, when the harvest comes, one sometimes sees that one's first judgment was wrong and exclaims: "Oh! what splendid fruit these trees are bearing! When they were but mere shrubs, they were surrounded by thorns which we considered a menace to everything around. By an effort of conscience and a victory over ourselves, we respected them; and see what these trees have borne. This is the recompense for having obeyed the orders of the Master."

We are slow in recognizing ideas when they first appear. Man is not able positively to distinguish between tares and wheat. Can we know, when children are born, what they will grow to be? We are not prophets. Let us not try to act as if we were and say: "From this shall that come and that shall be followed by another consequence." This is the way the prophets of evil succeed in terrifying the population. This is the way, in the old

Roman Empire, the tender shoots of budding Christianity were trod upon by iron heels. And yet, in these shoots flowed the sap of the world, the future of all peoples, of those peoples condemned, by an unknowable decrepitude, to despair of existence itself, to lean toward the grave, in an immense weariness of life. The soul of men, overwhelmed with disgust and despair, in spite of the greatness of the flesh and exterior power, folds back upon itself like a tired wing.

Young Christianity loved, during the course of its mortal life, the eternal life; it adored it as the fairest and greatest of things; it preached hope upon the brink of the grave from whence descended antiquity. Misunderstood by a world too old, it was considered a public danger. Those who diffused the doctrine of life were decried as enemies of the human race. They were hunted, thrown to wild beasts, destroyed as dangerous pests. Let us not expose ourselves by pretentious comparisons. An analogous phenomenon is passing before our very eyes.

To-day, my Brothers, religion has arrived at an epoch where certain things have become very old. The traditional believers groan among themselves. A new life is needed, a new contact with the eternal source; a new tie, so to speak, with the holy of holies is necessary in order to set forth again with renewed life.

But, now what happens? Along the entire line, in the official Churches, the weeding has no pity for anything which is new, as if it were poison and tares. One works with magnificent decision, against all the teachings of Christ, against His entire spirit, claiming all the while that His tradition is being preserved. In the name of that which is called "fidelity," one expels, exterminates, suppresses those who, to remain true to their conscience and to the message which God has put in their souls, do exactly that which a man should do, knowing that it is only by these direct and personal messages that the thews and sinews of the old Churches can be renewed. What will happen if the Churches weed out all the really

vigorous plants which are beginning to spring up here and there and of which the first seed has sometimes been blown by the breath of the divine spirit itself ?

Oh, no! weeding is not an employment to be recommended! No matter how honorable are the men who practise it, no matter what official mandate to weed they pretend to have, this weeding is only iniquity and vandalism; it is the slaughter of souls; there are no words strong enough for it. But this should not discourage those who seek to clear the paths.

When shall our blind eyes and our deaf ears be opened for the comprehension of that which the history of every day teaches us, namely: "Let both grow together!"

In the political and social sphere, as well as in the religious, that which we consider bad and dangerous is often that which is most necessary. The most painful truths are, in every case, precisely those which will save. Sometimes the only way to make the air of heaven penetrate to the lungs and save the

life of man, is to drill holes in the old walls behind which asphyxiation lurks.

We are coworkers, and when Christ said: "Let them grow together," He knew well what He was saying. He thought especially of the end of His strangely serious parable: "When he shall come who can distinguish, when the great sower or the great gardener shall come, he will find that, often, the supposed tares were wheat and the wheat tares, and that the weeders have cultivated that which should have perished, and destroyed that which should have lived." It is to avoid this misfortune, in order that nothing may be lost, that He stays the hand of the unskilful. Await the harvest! Stay quiet, impatient weeders, for there are harvesters. You may be assured that nothing evil will attain immortality. No matter how luxuriant the evil plants, the worms will eat them and their certain future is destruction. Good only is immortal, no matter how much you weed it out or burn it. Uprooted, it flourishes by every thread remaining in the earth, and you will

find it again in the place where you have destroyed it. When you will look into the furnace where you have thrown it, you will see your victim, purified by the flames, emerge living from the destruction. All those whom you have thus exterminated are the great resurrectionists.

My Brothers, we have to present to you, in the name of the Evangelist, a certain number of truths to which you can say: "Our ladder is not high enough to reach them." Your ladder is very often that of practical men, who do not pretend to mount higher than a certain reasonable number of steps. But the truth which we are endeavoring to present to you to-day, is a truth which springs from the ground, an experimental truth. It guides our hands over facts. It ranges innumerable witnesses about us which say, "Amen."

No other counsel of Christ has such purport, nor has called forth such concert of approbation in the world of historic events. Around it all the crimes committed by men against freedom of belief and thought, the

crimes of profanation of brotherly love, the crimes against the future and all the evil which has been done in His name to those whom He Himself inspired with His spirit, rise up and seek its support. In His merciful, peaceful, and luminous Word is echoed the voice of the centuries.

Let us not be weeders, my Brothers, nor follow the example of the weeders. If, at the family table or elsewhere, you assist at the kind of weeding which is here stigmatized; if you see men or doctrines rooted up, to be thrown out as refuse, try, with a smile, to recall the parable of Christ, the parable of the tares, and say: "Are you not afraid of making a mistake? What if it should be wheat which you are tearing out?" And, without moving a muscle, they will answer: "Oh! We are quite sure that it is nothing but tares; there is no doubt of that."

Then say to them: "That is precisely why Christ has recounted the parable of the tares and the wheat. It is because we are too sure of ourselves."

See how sure these servants are of themselves! A moment after having spoken of gathering them up, when the householder restrained them, they were sowing in the field and surely touching the tares with their hands; but for every root of tares they pulled up six of wheat. With their heavy tread, they crusht others. The weeding once finished, oh! the splendid work! one might have thought that a squadron of cavalry had passed, charging the enemy.

Be well on your guard. The wisdom which comes to light in this parable is a tranquil and luminous wisdom, which should be mistress of all our fury and all our impatience. We have not the right to pass by; this is a veto formidable and complete: "Weeding is only for the Eternal. Let man not concern himself with it!"

Now, my Brothers, if you belong to the number of the weeded, if you have been considered tares and been uprooted, altho you are really wheat, fear nothing. There is a law, according to which nothing positive can

perish. Good wheat does not decay. Be wheat, compel yourselves to be. Mingle nothing false or bad with your intentions. If you are weeded out, do not weed out others; let yourselves be weeded out in peace. Then shall the word of Christ be accomplished in you; persecuted, you shall leap for joy.

It was thus that the Prophets were treated. The best were always the most violently weeded. But there is nothing positive in the judgments of men. All their processes are subject to revision, all their verdicts are liable to a higher appeal: "Await the harvest and the Master of the harvest!" He will come, await Him quietly, give Him unlimited credit. Then, even if your tears flow at the injustices of men; even if the hand of man is laid heavily upon your conscience in His name; even if your faith, treasure of your soul, is declared but falsity, deception, infidelity, and impiety; even if the name of your sanctuary be profaned and the discredit of official condemnation thrown upon your prayers, remain tranquil, fear nothing; He will come. "He will

gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

He who hath ears to hear let him hear! But who has ears to hear? Who uses them for hearing, who uses his eyes for seeing?

My Brothers, let us so work that the melancholy reflection with which Christ accompanies His words and counsel shall not apply to us. Let us open our ears to hear, open them widely, in order to preserve, in the depths of our souls, the teachings and promises of the Divine Word, which makes man broad and merciful to others, strong and invincible in his own conscience.

VIII

THE LAY IDEA

When Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.—Matt. VII., 29.
But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies?—Mark II., 7.
And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?—Luke IV., 23.

THE above passages lead us to a field of strife between inner authority and traditional, or exterior, authority in matters of religion.

To render the observations we are about to make on this subject more practical and more direct, I ask you to reflect together upon the place held, in the field of religion, by that which may be called original religion or, in other words, lay religion.

I purposely use this expression, lay. It



INTERIOR OF PASTOR CHARLES WAGNER'S CHURCH. PARIS.

appears often nowadays in the newspapers, in conversation, in polemics, and in law. Generally, in the mind of men, its meaning is simple and restricted. It is confined to a stamping-ground, where it signifies, above all, the antireligious or irreligious. Laity and profanity are, to some people, synonymous. Even laity and impiety are confounded, with the best of intentions or, if you will, with the worst.

The term laity seems to mean something new, something very youthful, according to the judgment of the champions of the past; something very new, according to forceful minds. The latter see in it a vague power, capable of submerging the earth and definitely sweeping away the world—I do not say the clerical, but the religious world.

Others use this term laity to designate a sort of indifferent impartiality toward the old creeds, still maintained by certain classes of men of superannuated mentality, but venerable nevertheless, for man is always worthy of respect in the things which appertain to his

inner life. Generally speaking, very few of our contemporaries have explored, even a little, the boundless territories of the lay idea.

These unknown territories are precisely the fields to which I wish to lead you to-day, and I shall begin by setting forth an argument which I shall endeavor to sustain by a series of facts.

In religion, as in all things, as in science, art, and in sentiment, that which is the foundation is the lay element. At its inception religion is lay and, in its profound essence, it should so remain.

Laity signifies the popular or human quality of a universal and fundamental humanity. The lay world is older than all others. To become lay, in matters of religion, does not consist in changing formulas, or dogmas and rites into the currency of actual thought. Much less does it consist in removing a cross from the spire of a church; removing Christ from the prætorium; unfrocking a monk or taking a nun's hood from her. To become lay, in truth, is to revert to the human root of

institutions, beliefs, customs, and sentiments. The lay spirit is the oldest, not because, with books and dates in hand, we can assign to it certificates of remotest antiquity, but because it is perennial. It belongs to a world of realities which are of no particular time, but of all times, and which excel all others, at once by their age, for they date from always, and by their youth, for they are constantly reborn in undreamed-of manifestations. This is what we are about to demonstrate in a series of observations.

Let us first seek an analogy and take an example from scientific evolution. Human knowledge first appeared in the mind and by the labor of certain ones who had not the especial quality for reaping its benefits.

Science at first was lay and inexact; then, little by little, it was classified, specialized, systematized. The mind was impelled in this direction by a normal law for the acquisition of greater order and clearness. After a certain lapse of time, a scientific tradition was found to be established. It had its institu-

tions, its staff charged with the care of its storehouse of experience and with the maintenance of its acquired ideas.

But this degree of organization once attained, we see science degenerating into autocracy. Over his primordial capacity for observation and investigation, man forms a species of hard and impenetrable shell. Cut-and-dried theories interpose themselves between the spiritual and the material. There comes a time when those who have original views and the instinct of the seeker, those who prefer turning the leaves of the great book of nature to enlarging upon the ideas of others, there comes a time when these feel themselves confined; they stifle. Then, by a vigorous effort, they arise and break the shell asunder, in order that the vital organs of human consciousness may not be endangered.

This progress from spontaneity toward convention, from genuineness toward artificiality, is everywhere to be seen.

Look at the world of sentiments. At the beginning, when they are very real, sentiments

have a certain expressiveness, certain manifestations, which are as personal and sincere as they themselves. Little by little, through repetition and imitation, they enter upon a conventional phase. They filter through the thick layers of habit and recognized customs, which discolor them and rob them of their sincerity and directness. There are periods in the life of societies, when the sentiments are so artificial, when the dust of convention covers so thickly the very heart, when even the expression of the feelings is so stereotyped, that men appear to us like automatons, with set gestures and without personality. Then, when a grain of spontaneous sentiment appears in some place, a little spark of true humanity; when a cry is raised from some great true heart, all the world breathes again, as if a leaden canopy overhead had been rent asunder.

But before the force and manifestations of genuine sentiment the sullen guardians of convention take alarm. They proclaim the necessity for barriers, raised by secular wis-

dom, around the sentiments in order to protect and discipline them.

They feel themselves responsible, entrusted with the guardianship of the sanctuary of the home and of love. But in reality they are guarding only empty shells.

They have forgotten the true God of that home, and when this God appears to them He is unrecognized and denied. The conventional rule, made for the safeguarding of the family life, ends by fettering and destroying it.

In religion it is exactly the same.

On Mt. Moriah, there was, at first, only an altar of rough stones where, in the absence of other sanctuary, Abraham, the venerable patriarch, went to offer his sacrifices.

And the law, at first, was an unwritten law, of which it is said in Holy Scripture: "It is not in heaven, neither is it beyond the sea, but the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart."

Time and progress changed all this. The religion of Abraham, with his primitive altar, was embellished, little by little, and surround-

ed by a greater magnificence; the law was written upon tablets of stone and revered as divine; doctrines, like shining caskets, were built for the careful guarding of the pearls and precious stones of religious sentiment; a special group of men in the tribe of Levi were appointed to guard the sanctuary, maintain teaching, and preside over sacrifices.

The sacerdotal hierarchy was born and waxed great. The living word was engraved upon sacred rolls and the subtle science of the scribe entwined itself around the characters of the text, as the parasitic ivy creeps over the clefts in old walls.

Worship and law, prayer and sacrifice, gradually quitted the popular soil, the furrow, from which life springs, and entered upon a period of crystallization or mummification. In a word, they fell into clerical mechanism.

A time came when the law was nothing but a dead letter, the name of God only a word, the soul only an inscription, once clear and bright, now tarnished and fading more and more.

The very source of religion seemed dried up. Under the silent sky the earth heard no more oracles. The torrent of life which was in the beginning was stemmed. The still waters no longer feed the plain, and, through sheer inertia, become poisonous.

The religious treasure of the past degenerates in the hands of those who guard it without animating it, and sinks into the class of inactive capital which is entrusted to men who have no longer the energy nor the intelligence to invest it. It assumes the aspect of an estate fallen into the hands of idlers who regard their land merely as an object of ordinary possession and are incapable of developing it by their own industry.

When religious institutions, gradually developed through arduous and natural evolution, finally arrive at the point of stagnation and death, religion must grow again from the root. Then, after the long agony of souls, in the midst of uncertainty, of spiritual hunger and thirst, a man is born, in whom the needs and aspirations of his time find consciousness.

To this man comes that which is so often described in the Scriptures when it is said: "The Word of God was addrest to such a one."

And he becomes a prophet. In the prophet are united these two forces—the soul of a multitude and the Divine Spirit. By these two forces he is consecrated creator and victim—creator of a new order of things; victim of the ancient order of things.

An old and invincible opposition exists between the prophets, awakeners of souls, and the priests, killers of prophets. The prophet is, above all, the layman, who is of no particular caste and who has no official mandate. He is a man purely and simply, whom the inspiration, to which we owe the great and irrevocable inner counsels, has found among his flocks, upon a throne, in a monk's cell, it matters not where. He is a man in whom religion is in a savage state, if one may say so, never having submitted to any domestication, for ideas are like the plants and the beasts. There are wild carnations and cultivated carnations; hot-

house roses and mountain roses; there are caged eagles and captive lions; eagles of the heights and lions of the desert. In the human realm we have ideas which are uncouth and rustic, ideas of the open air, savage and free, and ideas which are domesticated, prisoners, faded flowers, eagles with clipt wings, tamed lions.

When one of these caged lions, who generally flaunt pompous titles and a pedigree, meets a real lion, he looks at him with undisguised contempt, which seems to say: "Thou, a lion! where is thy cage? A lion should be behind bars. Thou art not a lion, for thou hast no cage." With equal reason, with equal justice, men of domesticated ideas and meaningless words, the titled guardians of institutions from which the spirit has vanished, say to the prophets: "Thou blasphemest; who has given thee the right to speak?" And the scribes, entrenched in their wisdom, exclaim in pointing to Christ: "From whence comes this man? Is this not the son of Joseph? He is neither scribe nor priest. He belongs to

no school. Who has given him the right to speak thus?"

It is as if they demanded of the hurricane its passport, or of the evening breeze its papers. Men of official and artificial light contest with the sun the right to shine! Such has always been their pretension, and everywhere they are the same. They called Socrates an atheist, Christ an instrument of Satan. Thus in our time certain fanatics of quack science accused Pasteur of the illegal practise of medicine.

Not only (and all experience proves this) is the lay element the foundation of religions, but it is by it that they are nourished and refreshed through their entire evolution, and when the ankylosis, old age, and decrepitude overtake them, it is by the lay element that they are rejuvenated.

What would have become of religions in the world, if, from time to time, there had not been men by whom they were revived?

No matter what the antiquity, the beauty, the value, the fundamental truth of the religion, if it is not born again, it kills itself with

formalism. To be reborn is the law of all true life. Religion must be constantly refreshed at its lay sources. That is the Fountain of Youth.

The old noble families, the names of which sometimes distantly appear, are, nevertheless, very young, compared to the peasantry from which they are descended, the original mighty peasantry which made Charlemagne descend from Pepin, and to which all of this world's nobility owes its qualities, its blood,—that sturdy peasantry which is the beginning of the race; it is this red blood that furnishes the blue blood of these old families.

Wo to the families, wo to the countries, who do not refresh themselves at the great wells, at the deep cisterns of peasant vigor. Their marrow shall wither, and their arteries pulse with impoverished blood.

The old giant of mythology, Antæus, was invincible because at the very moment when his enemies were about to make him bite the dust, a new strength came to him from contact with the earth, his mother.

The case of religious humanity is identical. Religions, arrived at a certain point of their development, become a little strange in form and conception, and lose their combative vigor and their capacity for conquering, by lack of contact with the nourishing and tonic qualities of the popular soil.

Our sentiments, even those which apply to the life of every day, will not remain vigorous unless they contain the element of renewal. The truth of our family sentiments is guarded upon the condition that there be a little love reblooming with every year as the spring flowers; otherwise they will be only withered blossoms of which the remembrance only remains, and with it, melancholy. *Are* they not the symbols of that which lives no more? Oh, the shrines where affection is only a relic incapable of budding forth in new manifestations! What dogmatists are the botanists! What a creed of withered plants!

It is by direct contact with the knowledge of his time that the elderly scholar maintains his freshness and keeps abreast of the modern

changing knowledge growing up about him; he does not break with his time. The two fundamental functions of life, commercial as well as organic life, are fulfilled in him. He receives and gives; he learns and forgets; he acquires and rejects.

A common incident with very old organisms is to experience deep-seated functional troubles. They retain in themselves useless substances and reject the life-giving nutriment. Is this not prccisely the malady which has attacked, in our own day, certain religious assemblages intent upon the exclusion and expulsion of that which is best in them? Another malady which works havoc in old religions is their tendency to declare themselves complete and final; nothing more is given or received. These religions bring themselves to the condition of preserves. The jar which holds them is sealed. Air can not enter in, for the air which gives life to the living, destroys the dead. And these who are spiritually dead, and yet pretend to reign over the living, declare: "Ne varietur! Sint ut

sunt, aut non sint!" This is the eternal formula, not only of one class of exaggerated conservators, or of a single religious clericalism, but of all.

At this moment of their existence their pretensions become a menace to the surrounding community; too vast a necropolis endangers the health of the city.

And it is here that appears the urgent need, nay, the imperious duty of revictualing, of laying in provisions of pure air and rejuvenated thoughts. To preserve ourselves from the influences of destruction which are lying in wait for us, our churches, and our beliefs, every one of us is very solemnly bidden to renew his inner patrimony, to retake his moral inventory, to return to himself. He is bidden to bring the lay element into his religion, that is to say, to imbue it with life, with actuality, with familiarity, to take it out of the old casket which has been the object of so much veneration that we dared not touch it, and to make it permeate the life of every day. He who condemns himself to eat the bread baked by

his ancestors will find, in the end, nothing but a stone. The duty of each generation is to knead and bake its own bread. That alone makes blood and bone.

If our time submits to this necessary labor, not only will life acquire thereby a more solid foundation, but, at the same time, it will be rid of the sectarian pest that preys upon it. In living in an atmosphere simplified and purified by his own religion, each one will feel better able to appreciate the religions of others. Beneath all the images stamped on various coins, the same primitive metal is always found. And yet it places all well-intentioned men on a brotherly footing, even if they have no affiliation with any religious group. All the great movements for the regeneration of mankind have been a return to laity, simplicity, primordial popularity.

The phenomenon is always the same; in the midst of an era of spiritual sterility, of poverty and distress, among the oracles which speak no more and the remedies which no longer heal, a man resolved to be a simple

man again. He had the courage to lift his eyes to the message of the stars and to measure, with earnest and thoughtful gaze, the depth of his soul. He rejected the maps of the universe already made and, guided by that obscure but invincible command which God puts into the hearts of pioneers, he set forth upon the boundless waves where there are great risks, but where the air is pure, in which lies the promise of great discoveries and which break upon the shores of new worlds.

This courage is called faith, and by his faith this man was saved. He found the living God again and reopened for others the sources of life.

One fact is evident, altho it may seem strange to those who do not know Christianity except through masks of heraldry and majesty concealed by dogmas, and that fact is that the Gospel, in the person of Christ, in the person of the Apostles, in the form of teaching, and in the absence of all ritual setting, was, in the beginning, essentially and absolutely a lay religion. Already the ancient Judaism, by order

of its prophets, had removed from its temple the visible images of God which the multitude found fatally conducive to gross idolatry. They kept only the building, but within it dwelt the spirit. Alas, as time went on, it was the building which became the idol. And Christ, seated on the mount, when His disciples, filled with veneration for the old temple and its sacred traditions, said to Him: "What an edifice! How wonderful!" Christ, the Son of man, was obliged to reply: "Of all this there shall not remain one stone upon another."

The truth is that, whereas no one ever possest in a higher degree than Jesus the veneration for all holy traditions and the fitting filial sentiment toward the Father, without which there would be no substantial history, so did no one realize better than He the danger of dead traditions. He knew that idolatry lies in wait for us eventually in every house built by the hand of man, behind every precept of law and every doctrinal formula. He knew that, if the letter does not die at its time, it

kills the spirit, as the shell will kill the bird if it is not broken when the hour for hatching arrives.

When, in His time, the struggle was maintained between Gerizim, the temple of the Samaritans, and Moriah, the temple of the Jews, and when, from these opposing mountains, anathema was hurled, as is still the practise among us to-day, in order to prove to our neighbor that our religion is better than his, Christ scattered these two warring clericalisms: "The hour cometh, and now is, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

Was He indifferent to forms of creed? No! Did He not take account of their necessity, or at least of their worth and their utility? He took good account; but He knew that if spirit and truth exist, new and fresh forms are ceaselessly gushing forth from the inexhaustible spring of the heart. In these circumstances only is the form beneficial and does

not usurp the place of faith. A form, venerable in itself, is the enemy of faith and becomes, in the end, the grave of the spirit of which its mission is to furnish the pliant and submissive covering.

Christ was a layman, a man of the people, who had nothing to do with the caste of the priests and borrowed none of their methods.

He would have thought it a betrayal of His message to claim for Himself any other prestige than that of the truth shining with its own radiance, and He claimed nothing but the homage of honest consciences. He spread His doctrine, but it was without official mandate, and this informal manner of organizing the kingdom of God with fishermen, encountered on the shore of a lake, drawing in their nets and having never sat at the feet of the great scholars of the age, seemed totally anarchistic to the eyes of professional religion and was an ecclesiastical scandal. This apparent disorder was nevertheless the result of a divine order.

To penetrate to the underground fountain,

where flows an unalterable stream, fed by eternal sources, should we not cast off the blindness of monopoly and the pride of priesthood? To reach the veins of gold buried in the depths of men's hearts, the divine chords vibrating at the touch of immortal things, should we not renounce the stereotyped expression which never calls forth vibration and find again, quite simply, the cry of the human soul? In order to restore the moral ideal and the sanctity of the family and every-day life, should we not renounce the pretentious wealth of an artificial sanctity, return to those sacred commonplaces of which humanity is composed and give them such vivid and actual expression that the things which are as old as the world shall appear as fresh as the dewy morning?

Christ made a religion, savoring so much of the laity, that its sacraments are the spiritual transpositions of the every-day acts of life; a religion so simple that in it God bears a name devoid of all of this world's luster, a name borrowed neither from Oriental tyrants nor from the lords of the earth, nor from kings

who command and sometimes crush out their people, but a name gathered from the lips of nurses beside rocking cradles. The manger of Bethlehem, the workshop of Nazareth, the Cross of Calvary, we shall never know how essentially these things belong to the laity, to a rude and sculptural laity, carved out of the primitive rock of our human life, destined to be made up of apparent misery and invisible grandeur, of the clay of the earth and the breath of God!

For a temple, He has told us: "You are the temple of God; men are the Church, it is the living edifice of which every one of you is a stone." And we do not know how precious the stones are; no, we do not know, we who grovel in the mire, of what quality of pure marble we are made. We do not know, we who wallow in isolation, apart from our brothers, what an invincible rampart of tenderness and goodness we could become. We do not know with what a magnificent temple, with what a vault, vast as the blue sky, we could enrich humanity, if, gathering ourselves

from the dust, we should place ourselves shoulder to shoulder, living stones of a living temple. We do not know how many things to which, to-day, our eyes are blind, we shall see shining in the night, when eventually the light of our resuscitated souls, coming from the inner God, shall reillumine the dark roads upon which mankind, for centuries, has stumbled and bruised its feet.

My Brothers! I have endeavored to start you upon the road. You must continue the journey.

Lay religion is in its infancy. It is just, simple, unencumbered, without embellishment or halo, and it is divine because it is really human, of a primitive and genuine humanity, it is that which is divine.

The religious fiber will never be exterminated from the human heart. It is part of our universal inheritance. But, in order to maintain its generous influence, it must be renewed with every generation. To laicize his religion is the duty of every man as well as that of every religious assemblage. Our

souls live by the lay element which we retain in our religion. The bishop and the theologian, as well as the simple believer, are subject to the same law. The purest, the best, the most efficacious in their religious treasures, are the few simple and primitive elements which they have preserved and which are daily animated by contact with reality. These elements form the capital, the landed property, the bar gold, of which dogmas, rites, and all the intellectual and ceremonial accessories represent the paper currency.

What is the paper worth if it does not represent convertible wealth? This is exactly the value of religion when it is stript of its lay foundation.

The urgent necessity and the imperious duty of our time is apparent to those who understand the place which religion holds in the world. If our age lends itself to this necessary task, not only will life, threatened with moral inanition, be given a more substantial base of supply, but at the same time it will be rid of the pest of sectarianism which is devour-

ing it. Society cuts itself up into sects, when it loses the habit of returning to the fountain-head as well as that of thinking for itself. As soon as this serious step toward the search of the essential is undertaken, the secondary things retire into the background. But it is always through love of these things that division is created. We revile each other because we live on the surface; at heart, we are brothers by birth. The sectarian, whether he belong to the laity or to religion, has forgotten one thing, the only thing which really counts: It is that he is a man. To the sectarian, the human element is always something foreign.

Much is said of schism, and it is not surprizing; schism works evil everywhere. Every group has the tendency to divide itself into smaller groups, and their members salute each other with anathemas. What an anachronism! In this age, to which history has given its great lessons of unity, which science has furnished with proofs of fundamental partnership and the most liberal means for its realization, why is it that our eyes are not opened

to the cause of our division? What a contrast between the breadth of our destiny and the narrowness of our views! To see us, barricaded, each one, in our cave, one might imagine that we were cave-dwellers.

It is not the soul of the cave-dweller that the hour demands; it is the soul of men, animated by a great and brotherly spirit, genuinely catholic, that is to say, universal. And this is so because, by a striking contrast, the words laity and catholicism, one of which means popular and the other universal, are but synonyms of another word, capable of absorbing them both and which is no other than the word "human." May religion, the duty of which is always to tend toward the universal, not by a spirit of domination, but by love, purge itself of the schismatic spirit, separate itself neither from the family nor from the living thought, nor from public spirit, nor from believers by the wayside! May those who make profession of laity purge themselves, in their turn, of the schismatic spirit, cease to cut off from the patrimony of human-

ity the vein of religion which is a vital vein. May religion acquire more of the lay element, and may the lay spirit better cultivate its religious domains! And then we shall have found the formula for the future.

It is thus that we, in our time, must find faith again. According to the old Scriptural saying, it is neither in heaven where we could not seek it, neither is it beyond the distant seas; it is in our mouths, it is in our hearts.

Let us have the simple courage to be men; let us perform this inner act, the most audacious that a human creature could perform, let us give credit, a limitless credit, to the Paternal Power in which rests the world. Let us believe, as the rocks on their foundations, as the birds which spread their wings toward lands which they have never seen but which, by instinct, they are sure of finding.

Let us be men by a profound faith in humanity; let us love the ancient, sorrowful, and militant race. Let us remember that the greatest nobility is our primitive peasantry and that the most ancient, the most venerable

sanctuary, not made by human hands and which no stroke of time can raze to the dust, is the human sanctuary, primitive, lay, built by God Himself, capable of being reborn in new forms with every changing age. All those who have given to humanity, languishing in its confinement, a little fresh air, have worked for the maintenance of this sanctuary.

At this task the prophets labored, as did Christ, the martyrs, the reformers, all those who, no matter to what religion they belonged in exterior form, communed, in the most sacred moments of their lives, with the profound substance of humanity and who are brothers of their brothers behind the walls of Moriah or the barriers of Gerizim.

IX

THE SALT WHICH LOSES ITS SAVOR

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.—Matt. V., 13.

MY Brothers: I often stop in the streets of our cities to observe the life of men with a curiosity which is never satisfied, finding this spectacle more interesting and more poignant than any composed by dramatists. But lately my attention has been attracted by white placards pasted on the walls. They contain the discourse of a minister. In one place, passers-by are informed: "The lights have been extinguished and henceforth there will be no more religion." To quote further:

"We have torn belief from the human conscience with a magnificent gesture, we have

extinguished the light of heaven and it will never shine again!"[1]

The entire discourse contained a multitude of good and beautiful things, but it seemed to me that the passage quoted took away its beauty. It awakened in my memory a rime of the Alsatian poet Pfeffel, a contemporary of the great Revolution.

The Revolution was struck at, in its beginning, by all the crimes which religion had perpetrated in the world. A breath of atheism was blowing. It had become a word of command to say: "More than God!" In reaction against this excess of negation, Robespierre, after tremendous struggles, decreed, through the National Convention, May 7, 1794, that "the French people acknowledge the existence of a Supreme Being."

"To decree God," that was almost as modest as proclaiming His abolition. Pfeffel, with his finely ironical mind, conceived the idea of writing a letter to the good God, and, as becomes a poet, he wrote it in verse, inform-

[1] Discourse of M. Viviani, November 8, 1906.

ing Him of that which was about to happen. He said to Him: "Now, oh good God, Thou art permitted to exist again; so the Shah of the French has decided. Send him quickly a little angel with Thy best thanks!" I give you the sermon:

"Nun, lieber Gott, darfst wieder sein;
So will's der Schach der Franken.
Drum schick ihm flugs ein Engelein
Und lass dich schön bedanken!"

But, setting aside this humorous impression, my thoughts turned quickly to a more serious order of reflections.

Whenever you hear a word which jars or offends you, if it is presumptuous, one of those words nullified by their very pretension, ask yourself from what source it springs, if he who has said it be sincere. Was not a word like the one pronounced the other day in the Chamber, provoked, inspired, and deserved by the religious world, considered in a certain exclusive aspect, if you will, but nevertheless real?

Each one must begin by looking into himself. We are attracted by the illustrious ex-

amples of other times. Here is one, taken from the Old Testament: King David, one day, while walking surrounded by his courtiers, was approached by a man of sinister appearance. In the midst of the homage which his Majesty was receiving, his head remained covered. The personage not only had the courage to insult the King, but he threw stones at him. Then the chief Abishai said to David: "Why should this dead dog curse my lord, the king? Let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head." But the king said: "Let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him!" [1]

David, in the depths of his heart, could easily find some memory to justify the stones and the maledictions. He interpreted in its most favorable light the disrespectful act of his aggressor and received with wisdom the stones hurled with evil intent.

What if we should do likewise? A great stone has fallen in the garden of religion. Shall we anathematize and curse it? For

[1] II Sam. xvi.

what good? We would do better in asking ourselves if it might not be the Eternal who had inspired some one to throw that stone at us. Have we not deserved it? When I say we, I speak of all those who pretend to have a religion. I am prompted by an ecumenical, that is to say, a universal spirit. Let me address you as if you were a collection of Jews, Catholics, Protestants of every hue, and not the adherents of an especial church.

If you love your religion, it would obviously cause you pain to have others accuse it of being a rank weed which should be rooted out. But would it not be better to put your conscience through a rigid examination? Has it not sometimes happened in the world that religion became a useless and wicked power? Can you not recall those eras in which, devoid of life, it was no longer in contact with God through inspiration, nor with men through goodness? Senile, cold, selfish, it desired only one thing: to remain where it was. Through fear of dying it employed evil methods in order to keep alive. It would

willingly have sacrificed the young budding forces in order to prolong its own old age.

Then remember that, at other times, religion has appeared to us as an ally of the powers of this world, even of the usurpers. It sang Te Deums after strategic conquests and rang the chimes to celebrate the victories of tyrants. It imputed tasks to God which certainly do not elevate Him, nor heighten the reverential and holy conception which we should have of Him! God was put on the side of the strong who could do without Him, against the weak who had much more need of His protection.

Blasphemy was carried still further. In regard to the passage in Scripture where it is said that one can not serve God and Mammon, with a purpose of strongly accentuating the difference between living for God, broadly, disinterestedly, luminously, and living for Mammon, in suspicion, rapacity, and envy, they advanced this unheard-of plan: "To make God the guardian of Mammon."

Then another duty was imposed upon religion, that of an old and crafty nurse who ap-

peases a too clamorous infant by dishonest means, or cheats its hunger and thirst with illusory satisfaction. The hope of religion has been obliged to bend its efforts to the reassuring of man in the face of iniquities which justice and natural good sense would have counseled him to combat.

Religion has also served as a luller of consciences, crooning lullabies to keep them drowsy, while crimes were being committed. It was debased to the rank of an ultra-obliging companion, accustomed to drawing a curtain over all scandals. And, in addition to all these sad rôles, did it not also play that of dividing men against themselves, as if those of one catechism were not the brothers of those of another ?

Let us admit it, this word religion contains widely contradictory things. So many reprehensible things are hidden in it that all of us who love real religion should beat our breasts. For we belong to the family in which these things are accomplished. Let us not elude responsibility. We adore God and we are re-

claimed by Christ and the Gospel. If our life belie our doctrines, or if, because we ourselves have never sullied religion, we refuse to repair the wrong done by others, the story of the salt which loses its savor is the one which we should hear.

Listen to the Master who proclaims brotherly, but inflexible, truths. They who listen to Him are His disciples. Before Him are those who receive the message, the good message, stamped with the light, the color, and the air of the heights, the good news of lofty human dignity, of the incommensurable destiny of souls. It says to them: You are the salt of the earth.

All those who understand the signs of the stars; all those who feel the throbbing of the Infinite beyond the narrow limits of this world; all those who, beneath the trappings of human things and their tortuous march, perceive a law, a spirit, a superior substance; all those who, in the flowers of the fields or the head of a child, that most gracious of all flowers, appreciate the nameless grandeur, and

greet the invisible hidden under the veil of visible things; all those who tremble before beauty, true greatness of soul, courage, and abnegation; all those feel that man is greater because he himself can not perceive or believe it; all these are "the salt of the earth."

But this salt has savor; its quality is marked and proved. Neither salt nor light can be hidden. A lamp which sheds no light is not a lamp, no matter how beautiful or ornate it may be. Salt which has no savor is no longer salt.

Of what use is the religion of a man who, in ordinary life, is worth no more than his fellows, but who nevertheless has found it necessary to profess that he believes in God, in that prodigious reality which transcends all things? With his God who neither rouses nor defends, this man is only salt without savor, a lamp without light.

And yet, my Brothers, not only does this religion, comparable to salt without savor, exist, but it has always existed in greater proportion than true religion.

Good things are rare. It is for this reason that those who sincerely love religion should band themselves together before the judgment passed upon it by those on the outside.

In short, in the special case which occupies us, upon what is this quarrel based? It is very simple. Religion is accused of trading upon the faith in a future life in order to render the disinherited resigned to the iniquities and miseries of this life.

Generalized, the reproach is unjust; applied to certain cases, it is deserved. Here is life and here are men. Life is full of shadow and men are unhappy. Vicious, poor, scourged by all sorts of material necessity, the multitude is governed by mundane needs, fraught with suffering and privation. To this multitude certain ones say: "Alas! life is as it is; nothing can be changed. And further, the positive will of God is that it should be so. We must submit." Those who speak in this strain are most often in an exceptional situation. They do not belong to the crowd.

Ah! If I were shivering with cold, seated

upon a stone, beside my brothers, shivering like myself, I could say to them: "A better time will come, let us resign ourselves; do not lose courage, all will be made right and our tears will be wiped away," and I would be right. To fortify and console unhappiness, there is nothing like a word of cheer from one who is also unhappy. But if, clad in a warm coat, having just had a comfortable repast, I should seat myself beside one who was unhappy and do nothing but say to him, "Do not murmur, have patience; this poor world is doubtless dedicated to misfortune; but there is a better world; here is a good book, here is the Gospel, open it, you will see in it how Jesus speaks to you and promises you heaven."[1] Oh! if the living God appeared among men, as truly as He is God, He would snatch the Bible from me and say: "Is that all that thou offerest? Is it thus that thou speakest of me? Out of my sight, I do not know thee, never speak my name again! I prefer the atheist, who never mentions me,

[1] James ii., 14–17.

but seats himself beside the unhappy man, and really shares his sorrows and above all strives to cure them."

For in the end, my Brothers, what have we to do in this life? Is life to man what the class is to a bad scholar? A time, the end of which must be impatiently awaited? Is this life a kind of hall of wandering steps, where we kill time in awaiting eternity? Who told you that religion taught us this passive and sterile resignation? On the contrary, does not an irresistible injunction of the religious conscience compel us to transform the earth, if it be wicked and dishonest? Who told you that the Will of God could not be accomplished in human society, when Christ has prayed: Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven? Who told you that justice could not be realized among men? that misery was a divine institution? Who charged you to spread such a doctrine in the name of the Crucified who died on Calvary, in the name of the God who breathed in His body?

Worse than all atheism is the religion which

confines itself to a belief in God, but which thinks this world is incorrigible and irreparable. This is equivalent to saying that God is powerless among us, that He is not in man, neither in our minds, nor in our consciences, nor in our hands; that His law is not inscribed in the little things and the duties of every hour.

Christ, our Master in everything, did not have a religion of inert contemplation, but one of action. He had not a religion of pious memories, consisting of locking up in marvelous caskets the things of other times which are no longer usual among men. He had a religion of the future, appealing strongly to the conscience of His contemporaries and consisting of marching toward the things which had not yet come into being. He had the faith which moves mountains. Such a religion does not resign itself to evil; it declares war upon it. It does not dedicate a platonic creed to righteousness; it desires that good exist and then creates it. It labors, sows, forges, and builds. It is creative, in a

word, and works throughout the world as does the leaven.

Christ was reclaimed by the prophets, of whom the spirit was the same. Priests are too often the pusillanimous guardians of ancient traditions and party interests. Occupied in stopping up the chinks of the sanctuaries, to keep out the air, they busy themselves in keeping the narrow interior in repair where every one who persists in dwelling therein shall eventually perish.

The prophets, on the contrary, are men of the free air and the living God. Their catechism is often not written; they have it in their hearts. They do not seek God in the byways; they breathe Him, they salute Him in the light, and they feel His presence on the hillside. Their God does not hypnotize the soul into abject prostration. He breathes in their bodies and fills them with courage. They have no need of having Him proven by ancient dust-covered texts. They are uplifted by His strength as the wing of a bird is uplifted by a long breath. To think that

there is no God is an idea that occurs to them as little as the thought that light does not exist, that night is not night and day is not day. They live God, they suffer Him, cry Him out, shriek Him, sing Him; they love Him. And they have an ineffable love for men, a love which exceeds the boundaries of the earth, a conquering love which soars beyond that which man would ever dare hope for himself.

As for Mammon, they never think of him, for Mammon is the god of lower interests, of all that which the Spirit judges and condemns, of all that which shall one day fall.

The prophet sees in himself the future City of Justice and fights for its realization. He carries his word as if it were a sword, avenger of evil, protector of the weak. He possesses nothing else, but he would not exchange that for all the possessions of the earth, for it is his wealth, his power, his nobility, and his happiness. The voice of the prophets is silent at certain epochs. In the days of Christ, that which remained of these ancient seers had

become a routine, a worn-out word droned into the surfeited ears of the Semites. But that which had become useless and old, as black coals beneath dead ashes, was awakened again, through the soul. Elias was reawakened in the heart of the Nazarene. Ezekiel spoke with Him by night. Daniel, in the midst of the lions, taught Him the power of treading upon serpents, of encountering all the powers of the world without fear. It was for this reason that, poor Himself, He went among the poor; suffering, He went among the suffering. He preached no distant or metaphysical God, no Kingdom of Heaven vaguely possible after death; but a present God whose light He spread about Him, a divine kingdom of which He said: it is coming, it is within you, and the strong shall conquer it. He influenced His contemporaries, He accosted them with a power not to be resisted. Every one of His burning words had more hold upon the souls of men than has the tempest upon the ocean; He justified the movement as He went.

And we say that we are His disciples, my brothers! But what do we do to be the disciples of such a spirit?

He had the faith which moves mountains; our miserable doctrines have not even the ability to stir ourselves. They no longer have the nature of this force which is beyond all forces, and which St. Paul designated when he called the Gospel a power of God. The salt has lost its savor. Men find it upon the ground and tread upon it.

The lesson is bitter. To profit by it, we must be very simple and very sincere. The things which no longer render service become injurious. It is not permitted that a doctrine assume the position of a slothful king; it must remain in affairs; it can not retire. In the realm of the spirit there is no income to live on. Bread is earned only by the sweat of the brow. Nowhere is there more complete accomplishment of this saying: He who does not work shall not eat. In the main, we do not eat. There are a great number of men who are no longer nourished by their religion

and yet think that it can be of service to others; the multitude has need of a religion; it will calm them and do them good.

My brothers, such situations call for drastic measures. I know my time and I am not afraid of it. I am not afraid that the skies will fall, nor that God will be suppressed because men, who do not otherwise make profession of religion, no longer teach the catechism. But I am afraid that religious men will not be religious in very truth, that they will not live by their faith and that, in consequence, their faith will die.

There is a vulgar and profane atheism, impious in its very substance. It is the atheism of high livers, of unjust beings, foul with crime, an atheism of the birds of darkness, of malefactors of the night. This atheism has existed since the time when there were men who were disturbed by the presence of an invisible witness who sees and judges us. The blasphemies of this atheism are an involuntary homage to true religion.

But there is an atheism of noble stamp. It

is that which consists in rejecting the divinities which have ceased to be in the depths of the human conscience. That is a grave symptom which leads us to examine our own consciences. When the stars have traveled their course, they go to rest, and history is full of the twilights of the gods.

I think that the autocratic God, the God seated beyond the clouds, as the ancient Jupiter, in perpetual light and joy, the God who is always happy, the God of satisfaction, of conquests, of power, of finality, the God of those who rest upon their laurels,—I believe that this God leans toward the side of night.

We must have another, and His day has already dawned. This new God is the God whom Christ announced to us; the God who is man and walks beside men, ceaselessly revealing His invisible power by some visible proof. It is the God who weeps with us, suffers human griefs, who wears the rags which cover those who are freezing and the little children "with hands red with cold." It is the God who, on dark nights, hovering over

the great capitals, is infinitely nearer to those who dwell in fireless garrets, or even those who throw themselves in the water in despair, than to those who pretend to love Him amid the blazing lights of a chapel which adjoins a ballroom.

I believe He is there where there is need of Him and where there is something to be done. He is not like the men who arrive when the work is finished. He loves the seekers and the society of all those who work and suffer in hope. He plants the fields, blossoms in the souls, works in consciences which are yet dim.

As the sun, appearing in Oriental splendor, dispels the shadows, dissipates the night, and eclipses the stars, so does this God defy all the divinities which are opposed to Him; the gods of tyranny, the gods of comfort, the gods of avarice, sectarian gods, the gods of anathema, and the gods of contempt. As the strong fresh breeze is the forerunner of the dawn, so does this God send before Him a breath of wrath, a wind of negation and athe-

ism which clears the atmosphere. He sends haughty warriors ahead of His triumphal car who make place for Him and clear His road. There are figures which He does not wish to see; He demands that they be dispersed before He will appear.

This is why we should neither be astonished at, nor afraid of, that which is transpiring to-day. It is of the utmost importance that we be on the side of the rising sun. Let us be children of the day, and not children of the night.

If you love the beloved dead, noble champions who sleep in the grave; if you love all the eyes which are dimmed and all the hearts which have ceased to beat and are enshrouded in mystery; if you love the little children who await the future, asleep in their cradles; if you love humanity, that aged mother, brave and needy, who never loses hope, but occupies herself above all with her smallest and most abandoned children, then have no fear of the hurling of stones at slothful divinities. Set yourself to work with the brave men who un-

dertake the just and necessary tasks. If there are among them those who aspire to nobility of soul and uprightness of conscience, if among them there are those who keep the faith, those who, in spite of all past defeats, still have the courage to combat evil and misery, to work for the realization of more justice, righteousness, and fraternity, enlist in their ranks. Even if they do not hold to your catechism, be broad, labor with them that labor, and let the dead bury their dead!

The days have come again when, passing along the ranks of men, Christ will perhaps find more merit in the publican and in the men of evil life than in the haughty pharisee, that appointed farmer of the pastures of the Eternal. The days have come again when we must go on our knees before this proclamation of the Master, when He spoke of the judgment where we shall all be judged, where shall be weighed in the unerring balance the wisdom of the wise, the policy of politicians, and the religion of religious men. That which alone will count on that day will be this: "I

was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me." The same one who has said: "That which you have done unto the least of these, my Brethren, you have done unto me," addresses this message to us to-day: I am He who is with the wounded souls, and all those who are opprest and suffering; I am He who is beside the bed of the sick and in the grave with the dead. I shiver with those who are cold; and when the people lack the necessities, I hunger. Everything that is done to men is done to Me.

This is the criterion by which we must appreciate religion. Let us not seek it behind the mysterious mountains or the waning stars. Dig deeper into the abyss of the human soul, the human conscience, and human life. Seek God in the surrounding realities, for He is passing among us.

God is walking every day in the streets and in the roads. He follows the poor coffins

which go along the streets alone. He places wreaths where there are none. He prays beside graves where there is no longer any one to pray. He is in the solitudes. He is everywhere where there is one who hopes and gathers himself together in order not to give way to obstacles. He is in all brave hearts. He speaks all languages. He travels all roads. Let us acknowledge His force and His presence, in every effort persevering toward a better humanity. And do not trouble yourselves with the rest.

All your catechisms are null, your creeds are hollow, your religion only a nut of which the shell alone remains, a bank which has no longer gold in its vault, if, behind the names of God, of Christ, of the Apostles, of the Gospel, of the Bible, behind your formulas and your teachings, you can not show us the bar gold of reality, the justification of your doctrines by your lives.

The great attribute of God which we should reverence is life. It is the living God. Let us therefore be disciples of the living God and

guard our salt in order that it may not lose its savor! Then we shall have nothing to fear. That which is all in all, which is renewed with every day, which brings dawn after midnight and spring after winter, shall be in our hearts and in our midst, and by its virtue we shall make the deserts bloom again.

X

WHOM GOD HATH JOINED TOGETHER

What therefore God hath joined together let not man put asunder. —Mark X., 9.

THIS is a text of circumstance and, at the same time, a great rule of life. We will take it at its inception, in order to follow it on to a broader field. The first time it was pronounced, it was used to conclude an argument of Jesus against divorce. In the face of this categorical declaration, it is impossible to deny that the Master, directly consulted in the case, responded in a sense directly contrary to our modern laws. There remains to the latter, however, even after this, one expedient which is connected with a precept coming from so high a source. It consists of saying that many unions are of such a charac-

ter that they might be said to be consummated by entirely different influences than those of God. To invoke the blessing of a union made by God Himself upon compacts in which self-interest, passion, spite, and other innumerable deceptions play the leading and sometimes the only part, is it not doing wrong thus to interpose the name of God where, in a word, He is absent? And if these ill-assorted unions are on the point of dissolving, is it not rather a divine work which accomplishes their dissolution?

But our intention here is not to decide the question of divorce, except in so far as it relates to the conscience. We wish first to make you see what light this text can throw upon a great number of interesting questions of human life.

The greatest harm is done in life by a series of practises, all consisting of "putting asunder what God hath joined together." And here, to begin with, is a region bordering on that of marriage, where we would do well to have such a warning sounded.

The relations between the two contracting parties of a marriage at the domestic fireside are largely influenced and, in many cases, absolutely determined by the existing relations between man and woman in society. The current ideas of the nature of woman, her rights, her personal dignity and social capacity, the moral code in which tradition has fixt the duties and the respective positions of the supposedly strong sex and the sex which is called weak, have an immediate and profound reaction upon the lot of the individual marriage. Wherever it is forgotten that, not only in marriage but in other general ways, the destiny of man is linked with that of woman, that they are of one flesh, of one substance, of equal dignity, and that they should make common cause in mutual respect, there has the root of society been struck at. Morality, the education of the young, the family spirit, and public intelligence, are open to dangerous attacks. It is a misfortune when, in the home, the father and mother do not understand each other. But it is an individual misfortune.

More profound and more difficult to cure is the social misfortune, resulting from the general misunderstanding between the masculine and feminine element. The real, the great divorce, which is forever lamentable, is consummated when man openly separates his cause from the cause of woman, or when woman seeks to carve a destiny for herself disassociated from that of man. Alas! It is only too true that we are menaced by this divorce. We can not say that the time is coming when the woman will say, in pointing to the man: "Behold the enemy!" or the man make the same accusation against the woman, for that time has already come.

The whole world does not give way to the same exaggerations of language; but around these exalted ones who go about from both sides proclaiming war between man and woman, how many spirits are contaminated by the same evil in different degrees!

We do not belong to those who live in the clouds, in voluntary ignorance of evil and childish illusion. Of what good is it to deny

reality? Then let us frankly recognize the right which is founded upon certain wrongs.

Man has done much injury to woman throughout the entire course of human history. He often reduced her to slavery, shamelessly bought and sold her and, in short, degraded her to the rank of an animal and a drudge. If the right of the strongest was ever practised without shame by one being toward another, it was surely done by man to woman. On the other hand, man also complains, and justice demands that both sides of the case be heard. I will dispense, however, with presenting the latter, in order to avoid even the appearance of preaching to my parish—that is to say, on the side of the men. But something dominates this lofty discussion. And that is the indissoluble partnership of the antagonists. Let us even go so far as to admit that the wrong is all on one side and all the right on the other; yet this truth still remains. Man and woman were made for one another, and he who is really on the side of humanity can not enroll himself exclusively with either

party. His duty is to aspire to the fusion of those whom God has joined together. Outside of this principle of primarily necessary good-will, cohesion, and brotherhood, there is nothing but anguish, misery, and grief.

Man, up to the present time, having had the preponderant part, I am inclined to think that a more just balance is necessary. And experience teaches us that, in general, the privileged do not relinquish their privileges with very good grace. Effort and combat are necessary before it will be possible for woman to receive her just due. But let not the ardor of their cause lead the champions of woman into separating it from the cause of man.

God made man for woman and vice versa. Neither of the two can gain by humbling or subduing the other. Their salvation is in their mutual understanding. Let not man put asunder those whom God has joined together!

God has further joined man to man, fellow to fellow. Our misery and our greatness, our tears and our smiles, our fears as well as our

hopes, all attest to the unity of our destiny. In reality, by profound laws governing our beginning, our end, and our entire activity, man is indissolubly linked with man. But he has an inclination to be dissatisfied with things as they are. His spirit moves him to improve on that which God has made, and the number of disastrous corrections made by man upon the fair text of the book of creations is incalculable. He joins together that which God has put asunder and puts asunder that which God has joined together. With a perseverance worthy of the most sublime enterprises, he applied himself to the fatal disorganization of that marvelous body called mankind. The most violent, as well as the most hypocritical means were put in motion for the division, discrimination against, and isolation of, the members of the social body. "One flesh," God said. But man replied: "Never! What have we in common with these men? There is a gulf between their interests and ours." And high and low, in mutual contempt, in pride, in hardness of heart, in self-

ishness, that stupid destroyer of magnificent good, common to all, man has separated himself from man. Wealth and poverty, the language he speaks, the dress he wears, the work he does, religion itself, have served him as instruments of disunion. He has completed all the schisms, agitated all the causes of animosity; he has crumbled, broken in pieces, and ground the entire edifice of humanity. And always, through all the ages divided by blind conflicts, this conviction has had possession of men's spirits: "The death of these is my life, their loss is my gain, their ruin my prosperity, their extermination my triumph." Madmen that we are! That which man undertakes against man, he undertakes against himself. That which class contrives against class, it contrives against itself. The blows which one nation strikes at a sister nation, and all nations are sister nations, will fall finally upon its own head. Our cause is one. This is what must never be forgotten, even in the gravest contests, the most ardent disputes, in the presence of countries which are cross-

ing swords, of parties defending their political interests, of thinkers or believers combating for ideas or for doctrines. Man must not put asunder that which God has joined together.

Another tie, established by God, is that between the earth and man. Among the functions of normal humanity, the cultivation of the soil is in the first rank. A large part of the inhabitants of the globe are kept in touch with the soil by force of circumstances. And if the great and holy labor of digging fields, sowing the grain, and gathering in the harvest should cease, it would be the end of the world. It is none the less true that an unfortunate tendency moves men to abandon the soil. This tendency, greatly accentuated in modern life, has created an extraordinary movement toward the cities. The great centers have been inordinately inflated, life has retired from the fields. A multitude of men, more and more numerous, have accustomed themselves to leading an artificial life, far from nature and the infinite resources which she offers for health. Weaned from the air, from

exercise and space, the generations have been engulfed, drained of their blood, extinguished in the monstrous cities which devour their inhabitants. Living in hordes has created promiscuity and vices hitherto unknown. And in the numberless and nameless multitude the individual sees himself condemned to solitude. Hideous misery has made its appearance, attaining such proportions that it baffles and disheartens the most courageous. But those favored by fortune have paid their debt in other forms. They have learned to know the disorders, the nerves, and a whole series of physical and moral infirmities inherent in an artificial life and prophetic of the decadence of the race. The combined efforts of genius, of good, of science, and of the spirit of sacrifice, will hardly succeed in stemming, even feebly, the terrible results of the gigantic error in which society has engaged. There will be neither peace, calm, nor security until man shall have reconciled himself with the soil. Man must not put asunder that which God has joined together.

If we pass from the social to the moral domain, this saying will find new and powerful confirmation. An inner logic joins acts with their consequences. Man has sought to break this chain. He sows the act, but he wishes to prevent its bearing fruit. It is an old story that fire burns and water moistens. We see him, nevertheless, applying his wit to playing with fire without being burned, touching evil without being endangered or soiled. A new art is born with the sole purpose of protecting each one from the natural consequences of his conduct, and, in fact, suppressing the responsibility. If I contract debts, I should pay them. If I cause damage, I should repair it. If I soil, I must cleanse. If it happens that I am late, I can not expect to be treated as he who has arrived on time. Always and everywhere it is right that I assume the consequences of my acts. But that is the common law, and where is the man who does not seek to evade it? Are laws not made to be infringed and twisted? What is the use of having resources of mind if we must submit

to such humiliating conditions? To contract debts is the part of a great lord; to pay them is mean and servile. That is what his humble tenant would feel, the peasant of the soil who is unable to rise to a higher conception. Who has the audacity to pretend that I, a spirit free from vulgar prejudice, should waste my time in childishly repairing the damage which I, absent-mindedly or for pleasure, might have caused others? Is it not a sign of high social position to create disorder, bespatter passers-by, leave certain traces, more or less appropriate, along one's way, just as it is a sign of servitude to repair disorder and to clean? And for what were commands and laws made? For the community of martyrs. Shall we be made to wait our turn? Shall we not be served first even if we were the last to come? What do you think we are?

And it is thus that a conception of life flourishes by which each one considers himself above the law.

Take the best and leave the rest to others; skim the cream from life and honors, gather

from the top of the basket, demand of all things the advantages, and refuse to accept the inconveniences. In a word, do the choosing, in order to enjoy the silver lining without the cloud, the sun without the shadow, that is the goal of goals! That which God has joined together is thus easily put asunder.

But this kind of ability does not lead very far. The time comes quickly when it turns against those who have employed it.

Practises of this sort are contagious. Their very success is the presage of their certain ruin. If you separate from acts their consequences, from rights their duties, from advantages their inconveniences, from enjoyment its pain and effort, the hour has struck when all the aspirations of your fellow citizens will be concentrated in this single thing: demanding for all, obligation for none. The result is easy to foresee; each one presents his bill; but where are those who pay?

We regretfully admit that practises, the absurdity of which is equal to their bold and haughty bearing, do not appear upon the sur-

face, and yet they threaten to become a base of education. Let us look into ourselves, establish our schedule, that an examination of conscience may be made seriously and impartially. Do we not, in the education of our children, often follow this baneful tendency to separate an act from its consequences? Doubtless paternal wisdom obliges us to save a child from danger into which it has thrown itself by folly or by inexperience. But, aside from this extreme case, what valid motive have we for not allowing things to follow their natural course?

Is it right that a child should let an object fall or even throw it and that its elders should pick it up? Is it wise that the child should leave its books, its implements, its clothes, or its toys in disorder, and that you should put them away? Is it right that a son count upon his father to make reparation for his follies? You give your children teachers and masters to guide them and servants to wait upon them, thinking thus to contribute to their education, to render it more complete and

more careful. You must know, however, that no master or teacher can give a man, in his youth, more impressive lessons or firmer instruction than he can derive from the consequences of his own actions, if he is left face to face with them. You have drawn your wine; now drink it. You have wished that your bed be made in such a fashion and not in the way in which you were counseled; now lie in it. In all things have the courage to take upon yourself the consequences of your acts. If, from the beginning of life, this method is followed, the character will be formed and man will be taught by life itself. Ah! I know it well, one must pay dearly for its lessons; but they are also given in a masterly manner; one can not risk forgetting them.

Those who, in order to make the life of their children easier, shield them from the unhappiness born of their indolence, their carelessness, their thoughtlessness or disobedience, serve and love them in an entirely wrong manner.

And behold us led by the natural course of

ideas to a capital error which is found again and again in all spheres of human activity. I speak of that tendency which consists of separating the fruit of labor from labor itself, and putting the results before our eyes arranged in apparent abundance and instructive variety. There is nothing more interesting, or more inspiring, but nothing is more fatal. One could call this tendency the spirit of exhibition, or, if this word exhibition sounds badly and leaves an unpleasant after-taste, the spirit of exposition.

In the natural order of things, the fruit belongs to the tree, the work to the laborer. The exhibition of a great deal of marvelous and exceptional fruit bewilders the spectator. It makes him lose his sense of reality, especially if the tree is not shown, nor the long labor of man and nature which has made it grow remembered. The knowledge of one fact is necessary; that the trees have need of time to grow, that their fruit is the patient product of unceasing care, a result attained with difficulty through pain and the intelligence of man

collaborating with the forces of nature. But this idea is lost sight of, in the presence of an accumulation of a great quantity of fruits far from the trees upon which they have ripened and the fields where the trees have grown. The esthetic sense and the taste do not suffice for the real appreciation of a product. Another element must enter in, the appreciation of the labor which this product has involved. This is preeminently the socialistic idea. It can only be acquired by experience. If you have seen the laborer turning the furrow, sowing, harrowing, harvesting the grain and thrashing it, if you have followed it to the mill and have seen the arduous labor of the baker in the cellar before his ovens, then when you take your bread in your hand you know what you are eating and holy thoughts of brotherhood will come to you, putting you in touch with real life and bringing you nearer to other men. But if you have not seen with your eyes, nor accomplished with your hands, the labors represented by a bit of bread, your spirit will not be nourished in eating it. Ingratitude and

forgetfulness will be the foundation of your mind.

This reasoning is applicable to all the labors of the hand and of the spirit and also to those of the heart. If we see only the results and not the accompanying labor, our judgment is superficial and we are always and everywhere aside from the question.

I consider as a social calamity the fact that the laborer is hidden or absent while we are enjoying the fruit of his labor, or are called upon to judge it. God made the world and all things, but He did not conspicuously sign His work. He thought, as the great artists did, that the eminently personal composition of the work rendered any other signature unnecessary. Then what happened? Certain ones concluded that God did not exist. Otherwise, He would have found means of putting in a conspicuous position: "Deus fecit." If it has come to pass that the Father, who, according to the word of Christ, works always, is forgotten to this extent, should we be astonished that the laborer is forgotten when his

labor is not seen? Thus bread is eaten without a thought for the peasant; at the fireside, the wood-cutter or the miner is forgotten; under the roof which shelters us, we forget the carpenter and the mason; we forget the prophets, the martyrs, the pioneers in all domains, and life is often nothing but a horrible ingratitude where each one contemplates and judges the results without thinking of those who have produced them.

Generations thus brought up will end by not knowing that trees must have time to grow and that, according to the true word of the Latin poet in speaking of the works of the spirit: "The muse has given nothing to men except with much difficulty." Such proceedings influence public spirit and education in a deplorable fashion. Each one who does not consider the cost of things becomes impatient, exacting, and wishes to be served at once and abundantly. He willingly imagines that everything is easy. He has seen so many wonders that he is much surprized that one can not be presented to him upon command and forth-



Pastor Wagner Engaged in His Favorite Mode of Exercise.

with. And if he is himself obliged to pay and to put his shoulder to the wheel, nothing equals his surprize and his astonishment. He considers that he is wasting his time, that he is being sacrificed. The day after he has cultivated his field he is stupefied at not seeing the bread already upon his table.

God has joined the fruit to the labor and the work to the worker. Let us never forget that. Let us look less at the windows where the products are exposed and more at the back of the shop where they are being prepared. Let us learn to know life better in its gradual evolution; let us initiate our children from their youth into these lofty truths which are the columns of the life of society.

God has further joined the different ages of life to each other. When existence is normal, it contains always both young and old, men in the prime of life, others on the decline, and others in the morning of their days. This condition is necessary for the good of all.

I know of nothing more unwholesome than the relegation of each one to his exclusive age.

Doubtless a child turns to a child; the young naturally seek association with the young; men in their full strength need the society of those who, like themselves, are engaged in a militant existence. And it would be unjust to prevent the following out of each separate bent, which is the very indication of good sense. To mingle everywhere all ages of life, pell-mell, ceaselessly to impose the presence of the old upon the young and, reciprocally, continually to break in upon the silence and meditation of old age with the noise and enthusiasm of youth would be folly. But we must not exaggerate, for if old age flees from youth, if those who live in the heat of battle avoid the veterans, if old age has no little children clamoring on its knees, if the child does not caress the grandfather in listening to his stories, what will become of the family, the cohesion of ages; what will become of that source of wisdom and strength springing from an exchange of views, of experiences, and of natural gifts? Then the old isolate themselves in their corner, understanding nothing

of the aspirations of the future, the young set out upon new and often adventurous paths without restraint and without guide. The former are plunged in their lethargy and the latter in their inexperience. And between the two are the men of middle age at war with the exigencies of daily affairs, alike incapable of comprehending those who have quitted the arena and those who are about to enter it.

Man must not put asunder that which God has joined together! The more it is confirmed in details, the more does this great law seem to grow and overspread the entire horizon! New applications are springing up before our eyes with every hour.

God has joined life to sorrow, darkness to light, the spirit to the letter, the soul to the physical organism. We prefer life without sorrow, light without shadow; we prefer a soul free from shackles, and we seek a spirit, free from all bondage, thus too often running ashore upon empty formula, destitute of spirit as our wings, exhausted with soaring toward the immaterial, fail us. Let us be warned by

Christ, in order to shun these vain and hazardous undertakings which, for man, consist in attempting to improve upon the eternal work and in putting asunder that which God has joined together.

"My words are light and life," Jesus said. May this, in its turn, become a flaming torch upon our path.

XI

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you.—Matt. V., 44.

I LOOK at this phrase and it seems to me as if an abyss yawned before my feet. Sounding its depths, the old word of the prophets echoes in my memory: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." The stellar distances alone can give an idea of the formidable distance established between the human animal and justice, between that which we are by certain instincts, and that which the Gospel wishes to make of us.

To hate our enemies is our strongest passion. Our dearest glory is to appear wrapt in its garments. The exact symbol of man,

at heart, is the savage, whose hands are dripping with blood and whose greatest pride is the scalps of his enemies hanging from his belt. But, in this rudimentary being, uncivilized, ferocious, and corrupt, Christ perceives infinite possibilities. In this brute, His eye distinguishes the fraternal being, just as, in the rough rock, the artist foresees the statue in which stone will be made flesh, quivering with life.

If every purpose undertaken is an evidence of faith in the object, the pursuit of which we incite, what ardent faith must Christ have had in humanity, seeing it as it is, to dare to say seriously: "Love your enemies," adding: "Be perfect even as your Father is perfect!" The lack of proportion between the goal and those whom He indicated has given rise to an imputation of exaggeration. Matter-of-fact men have seen, in this command, a lack of perception. Christians have often arrived at a dogmatic understanding. Jesus would have shown them the inaccessible, in order to provoke contrition and the humble avowal

that they were poor sinners, saved by grace alone. They, therefore, ceased to think of this laudable injunction of the Master, become for them a holy irony, forgetting that the frank confession that one is a poor sinner does not involve the necessity of so remaining. Certain resignations are bad.

We are about to seat ourselves at the feet of Jesus, respectfully and in a spirit of confusion and adoration, and to consider His word as if He had really meant to say that which He said.

A preliminary remark intervenes: "Thou shalt hate thine enemy," is not a text of the Old Testament. To oppose, on this point, the Law against the Gospel, the Jewish moral code against that of the Christians, is an error and an injustice. To attempt to saddle the phrase in question upon the rabbis of Talmud, would be childishness, even if it could be found among their writings. Can it reasonably occur to the mind of man that an individual, a corporation, or a race has invented and codified hatred of the enemy?

Do you wish to know the author of the passage cited by Christ, the doctor who inspired the "Ancients," Jews as well as heathen, with hatred of the enemy? I know him. He belongs no more to Hebrew literature than to that of the pagans. He is an author contemporary with all the ages; he is called "the old man." There is none more ancient than he; but it is also impossible to be more modern.

Let us leave the Jews and the pagans alone. May the rabbis sleep in peace with the philosophers! Let us examine the Christian, consider our own hearts and lives. Our consciences can respond to us, if, indeed, the author, responsible for the text given on the Mount, is not "the old man." "At the enemy!" is the hideous counsel murmured to each one of us by his baser nature. It is the entire code of the beast which is slumbering in every one. Never has author or orator had more success. Christ provokes him directly, establishing a determined antagonism between that which suggests the "ancient"

and that which He Himself demands, in the name of God and of our higher origin.

The distance between the two points of view is great. To span it, we have need of a ladder as high as that of Jacob. There are many rounds to climb. We are about to point out some of them. But there is no doubt as to which is the first. The first round, leading from hate to love, of a very considerable distance, is indicated in these words: "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth!"

This is what must be proven, you think, and you are not wrong. But, please God, it will be easy to furnish entire proof.

The old saying, "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," is in bad odor. It has a certain suggestion of ferocity. We are accustomed to see in it the sign of savagery in human relations. But this is the result of routine and ingratitude. "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" is a law of justice. Relative and mediocre justice, if you will, but justice nevertheless. It is surely thus that

Jesus understood it. When He opposed this point of view to His own, He compared two forms of justice with each other. Remember that we are in no way concerned here with the ideal of the ancient alliance as opposed to the modern. The Law and the Prophets rose above the "eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" to an immense height. But had they not been able to do so, would Christ then have been able to unfold so vast a horizon, to effect an entrance upon another world, if the primary round had not been attained? All this, my Brothers, is true. I am ashamed to say it, for, after all, it is not especially laudable that we must be seriously exhorted to make some effort toward lifting ourselves to the level of retaliation, two thousand years after the star of Calvary has risen upon the world. We are there, however, that is certain. And I am not thinking now of places which are devoid of light or beliefs. I am thinking of Christian nations, of current practises among so-called disciples of Christ.

For the immense majority of peoples and

individuals, there is marked progress in beginning to conform to a maxim which is decried and held in contempt. "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," represents to us the strict proportion between the offense and the retaliation. Just God! That the measure should seem mean compared to our thirst for vengeance when once aroused! In truth, it is offered to us as rations to a beleaguered army. How much more abundant is the quarry toward which our instincts lead us! In fact, man knows no limit when he gives himself over to the promptings of his baser nature. His hate knows no bounds. Look at life! The purest wheat, fallen upon the richest soil, gives only a meager return, compared to the abundant harvests of rancor which an injury causes to ripen in our hearts. Two eyes are demanded for one, and that is sheer mercy. Did the lost eye not belong to us? By what excess of impudence do you pretend to compare this precious part of ourselves with two eyes of the "other"? Indeed, at the value which each one puts upon himself,

the entire person of our neighbor, a matter of perfect indifference to us, would still be too little to compensate us. Everything considered, we are goodness itself in taking one eye. Alas! that which I present here is not a portrait of morals, but a simple photograph, as commonplace as a scene on any street corner. But if you wish a particular instance, let us reach out our hands. Was it a Jewish king, or a savage chief, bedecked with crows' feathers, who recently pronounced the all too famous words: "For every citizen massacred, bombard a town"? No, it was the suggestion of a great shepherd of men, a high dignitary of the Church and, according to his lights, an excellent Christian.

"For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" We have need—contemplation of our society proves it—we have need of fearless prophets, entering with upraised lash into the midst of maddened beasts and crying out: "Silence! an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth!"

This point acquired, this round attained,

we shall be able to arrive at another, leading toward the distant goal indicated by Jesus. The second step toward bringing ourselves to love our enemies is this: "Love your friends."

The Master has said: "For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye?" Do we infer from this that the thing is without value because the pagans did likewise? That would be understanding it in an entirely different spirit from that in which it is written. As a matter of fact, Christ considers the love of friends a normal and ordinary thing, a matter of course. There is no merit in that. Jesus does not seem to have even supposed that it could be otherwise and demanded that this step be passed to begin with. But here is where the situation appears to me grave and alarming. For, in the end, I am afraid we shall be found wanting in this love of friends, supposedly very ordinary, but absolutely insufficient.

Do we love our friends, my Brother? Do we really love them, warmly, actively, and devotedly? You know very well that we do not.

Among friends there are many other sentiments constantly entering in than those of affection. Is it love to be jealous of one another? Is it love to love one another, as one loves good wine, or a luscious fruit? Is that not making use of one another? There are those who, in their friendships, practise the "eye-for-an-eye-and-a-tooth-for-a-tooth" method, with soft manners, caress for caress, and attention for attention. Since when was love made accountable? Is not loving one another rather giving ourselves, joyfully and without reckoning; comprehending the secret which is closed to selfish souls? To give is more blessed than to receive. The name of friendship is also inflicted upon what is only mutual indulgence, carried to the length of complicity and baseness.

But let us put aside these counterfeit and lying forms of friendship. What is the degree and ardor of even our sincere friendships? I notice much lukewarmness of sentiment. There is no warmth in family circles. In the relations between fellow citizens, at their best,

a certain coolness is noticeable. As for churches and sacristies, there is shivering among the brothers. The world is cold. We do not love our friends as Christ knew how to love them, with all the fervor and the sacred fire which makes up the charm of life. And here, secretly, more than one will agree with me when I say: It is difficult not to have enemies. Perhaps, after all, they are necessary. But in having them how could one console oneself for the thorns of existence, if one's friends were really the roses!

Why should this confession be further discust? You know I have gone only half way. For I am speaking of ingrates, cursing them that bless them, doing evil to them that love them, of closed hearts scorning the proffered hands.

Love your friends; love them well. Let the Messenger of eternal Goodness look upon you with that regard which scrutinizes and purifies the soul, and let him question you.

Wife, do you love your husband? Husband, do you love your wife? Parents, do you love

your children? Children, do you love your parents? Men of the church, do you love your brothers? Citizens, do you love your compatriots?

Here is an immense exercising-field on which we can train ourselves, from sentiments of cordiality, of active and militant tenderness, to the beginning of more engaging subjects, to the difficult love of the enemy.

At the point at which we find ourselves, the natural sequence of ideas evokes a remark that there are certainly true friends here who are really devoted. To these I shall say, Above all, continue. Do not say: "I have opened my heart widely and have realized complete tenderness toward friends. Henceforth, turning this charming page of the book of life, I will consecrate myself entirely to the deciphering of the more arduous page of the love of enemies." This would be a grave error. The love of friends is not like a childish practise which is abandoned upon reaching manhood. It must accompany us through the entire course of life. Do not think that you

deprive the enemy of that which you accord to the friend. No, the latter will aid you at first to support and then love the former. It is an aberration of spirit to deprive oneself of pleasant acquaintances, in order to seek the society of disagreeable people, upon whom, perhaps, one would have to impose one's presence. The heart rebels at these acts of violence against nature. Take, therefore, as example, simply Christ Himself. His life is a comment on His words and serves to illustrate them. Did He, that Friend of souls, neglect or lose one single occasion to live near to them who loved Him? Did He regret, at Bethany, the presence of certain sneering scribes? Did He repent of the hours spent with James and John, during which He might have been in the midst of battle, of thorny ways, better fitted than genial peace to test His patience and increase His merit? But no, Christ was human. Nothing inhuman is conformable with His spirit. The suppression of the love of friends and the substitution of the rarer love of enemies, never entered His mind.

With all this well understood, there remains to us only that which He has said: "Love your enemies." The preliminary rounds attained, let us mount higher, let us enter upon regions which are little frequented, but of singular beauty, comparable to the high solitudes of the mountain where creation shines with a light elsewhere unknown. Whoever has seen them desires to convey the whole earth thither; but one can walk there for days together without encountering a soul. This is the place toward which Jesus seeks to direct our steps. I will begin by declaring that His word suffices for me, inasmuch as it glows with the light of His life. Upon His injunction alone, I am, therefore, disposed to make the trial. But several good reasons to encourage me will not do any harm. Is it a sign of deference or a sign of defiance to seek good motives, in order to corroborate the dictates of conscience coming even from so high a source? As for me, I see in it only respect. Let us, therefore, examine the good motives for loving the enemy

Two very distinct classes of enemies exist: those whom we hate and those who, in their turn, hate us. For, if there are those who wish us evil, without their malevolence being returned by us, the commandment is accomplished; it is useless to insist.

Those whom we hate, often even without their knowing it, these are, primarily, our antipathies. Antipathy is a very widely diffused form of enmity. It is tacitly admitted and countenanced. It is bad taste to discuss it. The saying is: "I do not like him; I can not stand him." Ah! the potent reason for hating men! When this sentiment is declared, to what point can it not be carried and made irresistible and peremptory! I must confess that I find it a great force. If one had not other motives than antipathy for hating men, their cause is generally lost in advance. One denies them, even in endeavoring to rehabilitate them in our accusing eyes.

Is this intelligent or generous? It is neither one nor the other. The motive for hating is vile, absurd, and base beyond all expression.

Are you generous? I believe you are. Generosity sleeps always in an obscure corner of the heart while, on the surface, the ordinary passions hold sway. If you are generous, the conduct of your antipathy should improve upon the least reflection.

Take a person whom you do not like. He is deprived of a marked privilege; for I am supposing your friendship to be desirable. Not only do you cheat him of this advantage, but, further, you commit a crime against him in not possessing it yourself. Consider this situation! You can carry the antipathy you feel for a person only as far as its limit. This person will then occupy, in your equitable opinion, a position over all the others. You will give to him, in your fair judgment, a higher place, for fear of being partial. And here, recommended to your reflective generosity, are the victims of your blind impulse.

We hate other enemies who are powerless against it. Consider this motive more attentively. We bear ill-will because we have ill-treated some one. If this reason seems wrong

to you, you do not know the human heart. It is one of the best of reasons, by which I do not mean to say one of the most just, but one of the most potent. To have done wrong to any one is to have contracted a debt to him. The figure of the creditor is to be hated. Now all those whom we have injured, offended, or defrauded are our creditors. We detest them for having made them suffer. This is dreadful, but it has a certain logic in it. And, by this same logic we love those to whom we have rendered a service. You remember that character in the comedy, who was everywhere accompanied by a young man to protect him from danger. The danger was imaginary, but the arrogance of the fellow was genuine. He showered with attentions and gifts this man who was a living testimony to his courage. In him, he loved himself. Thus do we hate, in certain individuals, the harm which we have inflicted upon them and of which their presence, as a perpetual cause of remorse, is a reminder.

Here, my brothers, are men who have holy

rights to all sorts of reparation, and Jesus did well to claim for them a place in our hearts. This is only justice.

Let us proceed to those who hate us. One question before all, are they wrong? If they have reasons for hating us, it is we, then, who are wrong, in not comprehending them. It is true, in this world, that the just, in our eyes, are those who approve and appreciate us. The evil-doers are those who reprove our acts and our characters. This is a simple method, but iniquitous and, for us, perilous. It is possible that we have as enemies good men who are revolted by our ideas and our conduct. They are wrong in hating us. But why resent it, instead of deriving good from their reprobation by amending our lives? Could we not be grateful to them for a service which a friend has sometimes not the courage to render us? But listen, it is easier to love our friends for their faults and their weaknesses, than our enemies for their courage and their good qualities.

King David has left us an example which

is food for meditation: One day, a passer-by threw stones at him. Immediately, the royal suite counseled violent measures and prepared to carry them out. "Leave the man in peace," said the king, "it is the Eternal who has ordered him to throw stones at me." So should we reason when stones fall in our garden. They are often so well deserved!

An excellent method of becoming merciful to those who judge us unfavorably is to think that every man resembles slightly those mountains which have one slope toward the south and the other toward the north. Toward the south, the climate is favorable and the sun shines. One dwells there with delight and, as the birds extol the wonderful sites, so do our friends, lodged upon the sunny side, sing our praises. They have good reason. But why should those whom we relegate to the shadow, those reduced to explorations of cold and misty tracks where the snow never melts, make chorus with our friends? These draw their mantle more closely about them in traversing inhospitable regions, and say: There

is an ill wind here. How well I understand them! But, frankly, to hate them, because of this motive, is the height of iniquity.

Let us now admit that we have reasons for loving all those who have been passed in review. And let us give our attention to those who are entirely different. I am thinking of hating and malevolent enemies who detest us for our attachment to good causes, who outrage and persecute us. I am thinking of those who torture us, who lie in wait for our destruction, and who are the bitterness and the poison of our days. To whom could we seriously propose loving such as these? Can one love a destructive scourge, fraternize with a pest, invite yellow fever to one's table? Granted. This is self-evident reasoning. Nevertheless, Christ has made no exception. If, therefore, these are execrable, and without merit or right; if their very contact is to be shunned, what remains as motive for loving them? Their misery remains. What a misfortune to be so wicked! Remember further that other motive—to love unworthy sons be-

cause their fathers were your friends. The remembrance of a past which is a treasure of your soul provokes compassion toward these degenerate children. You love in them their father who perhaps has done you a service. Are not the most hated enemies, those bent upon your destruction, sometimes sons, wandering, without doubt, but sons of a Father who has done us a service? If not for their own sakes, love them for the sake of their Father.

But here is a great objection. The effort to love the enemy is not beyond our powers and, with the help of God, we can accomplish it. Granted! But is the effort salutary? Is the state of mind to which this affection leads us, desirable? Does the love of the enemy really fortify us for the good? Do we not rather risk enervating our souls by this love and thus losing our combative energy in the great struggle against iniquity?

This objection merits your entire attention. It presents an imposing appearance. But has it depth? That is what we must see.

The combat against evil is one of the essential functions of life. Everything which makes us less apt to fulfil it is morally questionable. What are the principal conditions of this combat? Clear-sightedness and justice. How can a blind man hit straight? How can the unjust contestant serve the cause of good when his personal hate deprives him of his clear-sightedness? In truth, hostility against certain individuals introduces a discouraging element into contests for even the best causes, and is often the sole reason for their lack of success. If St. Paul said, in language vibrating with ardor and courageous indignation, "hate evil," we must remember that hatred of evil lessens all that which is accorded to hatred of even a wicked adversary. Men who preach hatred, hatred of party, of nation, or of class, remain powerless in the cause of good. They injure their cause by their fury, they strike at random and fall into the snare of their adversary. If it is in the name of human progress that they pretend to combat, they only retard it. Their arms are comparable

to unclean surgical instruments which poison the wound instead of healing it. More than any other hatred, it contrives to guard the soul under cover of religious hate. These pious furies are incompatible with an upright life. Offered to God for combating error and avenging His quarrels, they are veritable blasphemies. How could methods, frowned upon by our consciences when employed in our personal service, become sanctified in the defense of the cause of God and of His kingdom? To forbid ourselves personal animosity, properly speaking, to be broad and merciful, but to become ungovernable in the cause of God, what more abominable machination of the old evil that is in us? Shall we drive it out everywhere, that it may find its strength again in taking the place of honor, in replacing the act of vengeance by that of sharpening a sacred text and plunging it, like a dagger, into the hearts of the pretended enemies of God? It is against such proceedings that, from age to age, the thunderbolt of this word is launched. "Verily I say unto you,

that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you."

If you fight for God, borrow His strategy. It is contained, in its entirety, in this sublime text: "For he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust!" The meaning of this, in other words, is that He remains always the Father. We, always and in all combats, remain brothers. The sash is not the insignia of the combatant, but of the knight. Even after the fiercest battles, he extends his hand to the adversary. This clasp of the hand is a sign that the humanity in us should dominate the fury of all strife, no matter how heated it may be. And this is the true point of view.

The man of hate, the profane or sacred demoniac, sees enemies everywhere; he is in a perpetually aggressive state of mind. He even grows to resemble an enraged mastiff, charged with guarding the home, which, when night comes, springs at the throat of its master.

The man of brotherhood goes forth to combat with determination, but he has with him

always one regret—that he is about to attack a brother; and one hope—that peace will be the outcome of the engagement. He cares for and respects, in the adversary of to-day, the possible friend of the morrow. Under the sway of this disposition, a first happy discovery is sometimes in store for him; and that is that he is in a fair way to stumble upon an ally. The majority of our quarrels, great and small, create dissension among men who have a thousand good reasons for understanding one another. They hate each other, annihilate and persecute each other, on the strength of simple misunderstanding. What good reason Christ had in saying: "Love your enemies," inasmuch as, hearkening to His words, we perceive that the majority of those, regarded as such, are not enemies. No, the love of the enemy is neither a source of weakness, nor a result of ignorance of natural laws and of the conditions of the struggle for life. It is a source of power, and it is the view of the true combat and its aim which inspires it from beginning to end.

We are partners even of our enemies, and that is the best reason, made up of the sum of all others, which recommends the enemy to our benevolence. He who possesses one member which does not suffer when the others are suffering, is ill indeed. If he should return to health, feeling would awaken in the menaced member. Hatred of the enemy can be compared to the presence in our body of a dead member. The day when this member, and that which befalls it, comes to interest you, as being a part of yourself, you are cured of the partial death which has threatened you.

Love is a force of life. Hate is a power of death. Who can ever tell the deformities and the wounds with which it tortures our poor hearts? To live in its atmosphere is to gasp in poisoned air, to be steeped in corrosive fluids. Jesus desires to deliver us from this misfortune. To love the enemy is to see the walls of the prison and the chains of serfdom fall. To love the enemy is to see the portals of a new world swing open before our eyes. It is to imbue our hearts with the magnitude

of the final victory over evil. The love of the enemy has a consoling virtue. Under the blows of the torturers, under the eyes of the persecutors, Christ, embodying in a single supreme thought the blind instruments of His agony and those, a thousand times more culpable, who inspired the hideous crime, made this prayer to God: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Did He then accomplish an act of mercy and pity only? No; but He presented, at that hour of succumbing in utter defeat, the testimony of future victory, certain and without end. He was sure of a hearing for His prayer, He foresaw the day of God when all those enemies should be conquered, not according to the word: "Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool"; which, in spite of all, countenances the existence of the evil intention to the point of destruction; but conquered by love, reclaimed, reconciled, and ransomed. He foresaw the eternal hour when there should be no more dissensions, or battle, or unbridled wrath, but joy and peace in the

house of the Father between the sons forever united. Love your enemies!

Our vision will never be able to measure the intensity of inner light and conquering good which this counsel contains, becoming, upon the lips of Jesus, a real cry from the heart. The joy of a divine secret, discovered and inhabited, trembles there. Let the contagion of this joy envelop our souls. And soon, upon these heights, as the disciples upon Mount Tabor, we shall say: "It is pleasant here; let us pitch our tents."

XII

THEY THAT MOURN

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.—Matt. V., 4.

THE paradoxes of the Sermon on the Mount are such as to awaken the most somnolent. A mind dulled by the habit of formulas is necessary in order not to react at the shock of these words. Among them are some which have the appearance of audacious defiance, hurled at common sense and experience. Unexpected, astonishing, and veritable enormities, they provoke contradiction and desire to provoke it. Under their peaceful appearance and their inflections, to which our ears have long been accustomed, the Beatitudes are essentially revolutionary. Nothing more subversive has ever been said.

Take, for example, this declaration: "Blessed are they that mourn!" It calls forth

objections from the earth. It is no sooner heard than one of the two men in each one of us revolts against it, combats and repulses it. And it would be lack of respect toward the Gospel to pass over these contradictions in silence.

If you should hear a word, no matter what it might be, do not seek to clear too wide a path for it and allow it to enter into the spirit unchallenged. The position of a truth which has triumphed in us without a struggle is always precarious. Tremble for it. The opposition which you have wished to spare it will make its appearance later. At the moment when perhaps you will have most need of its light, it will appear before you, obscured by doubts. Truth, however, will struggle to find a domicile in our souls, it will encounter obstacles from the first day and will establish itself only after having conquered them. It will thus be much more solid, and we will find it, in the dark days, ready to sustain us, stronger than all past assaults.

Blessed are they that mourn! Yet who

really believes this, who will admit it? Let us confess that the happiness of which it is here a question does not tempt us. We are not disposed to wish for it in exchange for bright days. If, after this mortal existence, there is for us a higher life, in an infinite peace, is it not much more desirable to await it without too much misery? Spared in this world and saved in the next, this is a lot in harmony with our aspirations. If the favored in life were reserved, by their very favors, for a certain expiation, I could understand the saying "Blessed are they that mourn," when thinking of the sublime compensations of which mourners were to be the object. But nowhere is earthly happiness considered a crime in itself for which we must be punished in eternity. It is not sufficient to have been ill-treated by life in order to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Sincerity, however, forces us to recognize that the life beyond holds only a mediocre place in the minds of men. The majority do not believe in it. As for believers, look at their lives; those to whom the attrac-

tion of visible welfare does not outweigh faith in invisible blessings are rarely to be found.

None of us, when we follow our natural inclinations, are attracted to suffering or disposed to believe it salutary. For that matter, we willingly accuse it of creating much evil, and our accusations are based on facts. To look only at practical results, does not one find oneself forced to admit that suffering is often an enemy, a power of death and destruction? Certain men were once good, generous, and benevolent. Pain soured them, hardened them, and made them malicious. Others had an abundance of sense and poise, and held to the straight path. Pain made them insane and vicious. There are some whom it brutalizes and degrades and others whom it warps for all time. Others it annihilates and suppresses. To see them, one would say that it had devoured their souls as the blazing sun devours tender sprouts. How many has it thrown, bound hand and foot, into the gulf of despair? Suffering creates infernal regions in the world which fill us with horror. These

pains do not belong in the category of those to which we can find a consoling side. There is no explanation of them to be furnished; they are baffling, stupefying, comparable to the black nights which no ray of light can penetrate. Shall we close our eyes to these terrifying realities? Shall we deny them in order that the word may guard its rights, blessed are they that mourn? No, we must deny nothing, we must resign ourselves to the truth, no matter how terrible it may be.

There is a kind of suffering which is an enemy, and is accurst, suffering which it is not permitted to wish for ourselves or for others, suffering in the face of which one thing only remains for us to cry to God: "Deliver us from evil!"

Do not think that in doing thus we shall have ill deserved the word of Jesus or taken away from its value. The first service to render a sacred word is not to profane it by placing it wrongly. In certain cases of inhuman suffering, it would be levity to say: Blessed are they that mourn, especially if, at the

moment, you are not mourning yourselves. There are words which are too lofty to permit of being invoked on all occasions. Do you not feel that in employing them unworthily you rob them of all force and denaturalize them?

Let us take our own measure and the measure of these words. Who are we that we should repeat them? Let us rather fear that they will turn into hollow formulas in our hands, into rash declamations, into cruel and bitter irony. The best things become the worst by perversion. Upon unworthy lips, a truth can be converted into a hideous parody. When the happy ones of this world, in order to dismiss with a formula those who suffer, in order to instil patience in the outcast whose burdens they would not take up at any price, in order to appease their wrath and safeguard precious privileges, when they throw to human sorrow this word: "Blessed are they that mourn," throw it without thinking, as a crust of bread which is good enough for the starving, but something to be scorned for them-

selves. Oh! then I no longer recognize the echo of the holy Mount; I hear only blasphemy and, with all my soul, I hate it!

And yet, in spite of the spectacle of pain which is accurst, in spite of my heart which dreads suffering, in spite of the abuse of which the word of Jesus is every day a victim, something in me loves it, as said by Him. From the depth of the shadows in which poor mankind walks, staggering under so many burdens which nothing can explain or lighten, I fix my eyes upon the strange and magnetic light with which this word glows: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted!" The darker it is here, and the more my chain goads me, the more I am attracted by this light. In the most profound depths of myself something responds to it and feels itself in unison with it. I know it to be willing to prove itself by itself and to win me over by its powerful sweetness, in spite of all I can oppose to it. It produces upon me the effect of those mysterious and friendly stars which have said to the poet:

"Stars, your glances bring us to our knees,
The call of the infinite throbs beneath your
long lashes!"

I look and I recognize that there are other things than the pain which is an enemy. Yes, it is true, there is another pain, a salutary pain. New horizons open, not of dreams but of reality. The word of Jesus at last spreads out boundless regions where pain appears to us as an ally. Let us endeavor to fix certain points in this immensity.

And, first of all, pain is preservative. When God created life, He gave to it pain as a guardian. Every time that ignorant or perverse man infringes the law of existence, fails to respect himself, falls into disorder and folly, he encounters pain upon his path with its cries of alarm and its decided veto. If pain did not exist, the child would mutilate his body by fire, by steel, by blows, and by falls. He would not preserve one member or one organ intact. A hundred times a day pain stops him, averts danger, and sets him right again.

If, further, pain did not guard the passage

through which we depart from life, how much greater would be the number of those who would traverse it before their time? Pain is a barrier, a barrier of preservation. For this reason, man flees from it by instinct. It appears to him as a phantom, and it should be so. Is it not there to terrify him and force him to turn back when he penetrates to forbidden ground?

But the action of pain does not limit itself to this rôle of preserver of life. That would be sufficient cause to hate it and to avoid it by all possible means.

Then it is plain that man, feeling in the face of pain no other sentiment than an invincible repugnance, is no longer a man but a slave. The fear of suffering is his only law. You can do with him what you will by threatening him with that which he dreads in the highest degree. In order to avoid suffering, he will lose his dignity, his honor, and his independence. He will betray his duty, deny his convictions, abandon his post, and let his neighbor perish. Has not tyranny always

allied itself with pain, founding its sway upon terror and maintaining it by torment, persecution, and torture?

If, however, pain preserves and guards us by its warnings, it is not right that we should recoil when it appears. There are pains which we must learn to confront and even to seek. Pain placed upon the path of duty should not frighten us. Let no one say to us: Do not take this path, for it is sown with thorns. Let man familiarize himself with pain, learn to endure it. He can not become a true man except upon this condition. In short, pain is our great educator, and we are now about to examine it in this rôle.

Upon emerging from the unconsciousness in which we slumber during the first part of life, what is it that awakens us, makes us conscious of ourselves? It is pain. Agreeable impressions scatter us. Pleasure and joy draw us out of ourselves and spread us about over numberless objects. Pain draws us back. It places us face to face with the problem of our existence and forces us to reflection.

Nothing is more interesting and touching than the first lesson which this educator with the serious brow gives to us. What could be more moving than the first real tears of a child, if it be absolutely sincere in its unhappiness?

The object of them may be futile sometimes, but the sorrow is profound and genuine. It must never be laughed at; that would be a crime against the human soul. Poor soul, still weak and vacillating, hardly conscious of thy existence, thy tears are for thee the water of baptism. By them thou art born to the higher life. They sanctify thee and introduce thee into the communion of all those who suffer upon the earth!

Later we sound the depths of existence, guided by pain. Let us recall the first encounters of our souls, filled with ideals, with the hard realities. Sorrows of youth, disillusionments, deceptions full of bitterness—who has not known them? Is he a man who has never fathomed, in weeping, the distance between dreams and real existence? To have

believed in a world where justice, beauty, and truth dwell, and to discover iniquity, ugliness, and deception, what an ordeal, what inner mutilation!

I shall not forget you, heartaches, sufferings of love, the pure and sacred sources of which have never been dreamed of by the profane. The hypocritical and corrupt world is not worthy of you. It ignores you, or scoffs at you. The just themselves sometimes treat you violently when, through having accommodated themselves to the law for a mercenary interest, they have been driven mad by their wisdom. And yet, of all that which traverses a virgin and living human soul, nothing leaves a more profound impression. The scar of the wounds which you have made is ineffaceable, and the poet spoke truly in singing:

"Es trägt wohl mancher Alte,
Dess Herz längst nicht mehr flammt,
Im Antlitz eine Falte,
Die aus der Jugend stammt." [1]

[1] Many an old man whose heart has long beat feebly bears on his brow a furrow which came there in his youth.

Cause of torments and of regrets, these difficult days of our youth contribute none the less to our formation and ripening, fulfilling the same function for our verdant youth that the pruning-knife does for the vine. It makes it bleed, but it fortifies it. The less man suffers the more ignorant is he of life. He deceives himself who believes that he knows it in its bright aspect. In truth, he has eyes and does not see. He lacks points of comparison. He is, moreover, ignorant of his own foundation. The best that he has, has not yet been called upon to be estimated. At the prick of pain, the noblest faculties awaken. The entire history of mankind is an illustration of the pain which is educative.

Hunger and thirst tore man from his natural inertia and drove him on to effort and activity. Without them, he would have been steeped in physical torpor and in the mediocrity of a vulgar well-being. In the place of lofty compensations for beloved labor, of vivifying energy, he would have known only the coarse blessedness of the satiated brute.

The torment of spiritual thirst has aided man in emerging from the shroud of moral inertia, of blunted indifference, in order to teach him the harsh pleasures of research and the great battle of thought where the bread of the soul is earned by the sweat of the brow.

If we have realized a certain beauty in the arts, is it not with our sorrow that we have paid for our creation? Where would the works which honor mankind be without them? The poet has sung:

> "The fairest songs are the most despairing,
> And I know immortal ones among them which are made up of sobs."

But the thought which occupies us passes far beyond the limits of this beautiful verse. It shows us that the marvelous fruits of artistic perfection, where shines in the light all of the best that life has to offer, have drawn their strength from the obscure roots of some great suffering.

When you see firm wills, determined characters, recalling in their qualities the resistance of acid, ask of them the name of the forger

who plunged them into the furnace, and forged them on his anvil as a tempered and polished sword. The reply will be: It was pain.

All the traits of energy which characterize a figure are the marks of its engravers. Courage, perseverance, decision, the spirit of sacrifice and patience are signed in the same corner. A life of ease develops no one.

Not only does pain cultivate courage in us, but tenderness. Pity learns in the school of misery. I do not deny that it also learns elsewhere. Happiness has given to certain ones a particular gentleness toward those who are in pain. Upon others devolves for distribution a natural gift of goodness which goes out to all who are bruised and buffeted by life. No matter what the path may be upon which I encounter pity, I salute it as a light from heaven. And nevertheless, in order that it may be clear-seeing and not only sympathize, but really know, must it not have bruised its feet upon the thorns of calvaries? To be pitied is much, to be loved is better still. But there is something lacking; to be understood. To

understand it is necessary to have passed by the right road. Pity owes its principal consoling virtue to its experience of pain. Then it can say in all truth to those who suffer: "Thy pain is my pain."

Preservative and educator as it is, pain is further a liberator. A certain subtle slavery exists which few men take into account; it is that of well-being. A series of tranquil days, too long continued, gradually encircles us with chains. These chains neither burden nor chafe us. They are concealed by flowers. But their effect is to make us languish. We lose, by contact with them, the habit of combat, vigilance, and character. Comparable to warriors demoralized by a long peace who no longer hear the cry of alarm, the cannonading of the enemy, the note of the bugle, we enervate ourselves in the bosom of happiness. By degrees our souls shrink. Petty fears and base calculations supplant great thoughts, virile resolutions, and vigorous actions. The fear of losing the happy calm which lulls us takes possession of us and, in order to retain

it, we slowly enter upon the path of compromise and baseness. No one has any idea of the quantity of minute acts of sordidness committed daily in the world by a multitude of honest men who are too uniformly happy and are eager to remain so. Their surfeited souls are horror-struck at the thought of privation, resistance, or opposition. As long as they are not disturbed, all else is a matter of indifference to them. In this stifling atmosphere, where we are overcome by asphyxiation, the advent of pain is like a breath of fresh air in a sewer.

A severe ordeal, one which, as masters of our destinies, we should at all costs have removed from our path, takes possession of us, changes the course of our ideas, destroys the rut of our habits, and breaks the chains of death which hold us captive. At the moment we suffer cruelly. But we soon notice that in its suffering our soul is liberated. The vanities with which it was entirely taken up become a matter of indifference to it. It appreciates at their true value, and recognizes in

their vapidity, the objects which lately seemed precious to it, and passes happily by that which, in other times, seemed indispensable to it. A great sorrow has elevated it and given it a point of view by which men, ideas, and events are perceived in their true light.

I am thinking now of the pain which sanctifies and delivers from evil. Those men are numerous to whom a rude shock is necessary in order to separate them from certain lamentable habits and to make them reject certain shameful servitudes. During the course of a peaceful existence, they succumbed to evil thoughts and to the customary temptations of easy days. But pain appeared and sought a domicile at their hearth and in their soul. The dubious guests whom they had tolerated were not able to support the presence of pain. One after the other they departed and the heart was purified as gold is by the fire.

Can we forget here that among the bitterest tears shed are those of repentance? No embrace of pain is stronger than that which racks our frames and chokes us with sobs,

when the thought of our faults comes over us as a superhuman power. To hate oneself, to condemn oneself, to wish to vanish into the abyss in order no longer to see one's fault and to find it everywhere about one, what torture! Nevertheless these tears are like the spring freshets which make the plants and the flowers bloom upon soil hardened by the long frosts of winter. What living and purifying waters can be compared to them?

Pain is finally a liberator because it has been the most efficacious instrument against all the forces of active oppression in this world. In enduring injustice, men have learned to love justice, in suffering for it and in preparing for its arrival. In enduring tyranny, they have learned to aspire to liberty and to submit in order to conquer for it persecutions of every kind. All rights and all progress owe their existence to some great and holy pain. And these liberating sufferings of which history is full, do they not shine in the light of a new day by the sacrifice of Golgotha? Has it not become the essence of all that the

just have suffered for the benefit of the world? The cross is the eternal monument of the pain which is liberative. Where would humanity be without it? Every century adds its quota to the proofs of this prophetic truth in regard to the sufferings of the servant of God: "It is by His wounds that we are healed!"

All therefore is not evil in suffering. It is not right to treat it as an enemy, for it is so by exception only. In the majority of cases, and this depends largely upon the way in which we receive it, it can become a friend and a powerful ally. To wish to avoid it, and to avert it from those whom we love, is almost to exclude ourselves and them from the most precious benedictions. Christ pronounced the word of truth when He said: Blessed are they that mourn.

There remains one step for us to take. Let us lift ourselves higher. Facts of immense portent are about to solicit our attention.

Here pain appears to us as the great revealer. Life is on the watch. Man is initiated into reality by all the facts which attract his atten-

tion. They lead him, as it were, by the hand from that which he knows to that which he does not know. Now, certain realities are hidden to us in such measure as we have not suffered. The eyes of our soul are not capable of perceiving them. There is here a strict analogy between physical phenomena and those of the inner life.

In the bright light of day our eyes see the plainest objects, our ears detect the nearest and harshest sounds. But when night comes they disappear and are lost in the darkness. From beyond the accustomed horizons, innumerable worlds, which are not to be doubted, appear in the evening sky and, in the universal silence, we distinguish voices and low sounds which were drowned out by the din of daily life. Sometimes we can hear the beating of our hearts.

This is exactly what happens in that other night where pain surrounds us. That which was clear becomes obscure. That which was veiled is unveiled. We have caught a glimpse of the beyond by means of pain. The satis-

fied man has no desire or feeling for it. Pain is found upon the obscure paths of holy and forgotten things, greater than those which are touched and seen. It reveals to us treasures of inner nobility, splendors of sacrifice beside which all that the earth has to offer seem small. Through the wonderful prism of tears it perceives reality of soul of which the most massive realities of the outer world and all the glamour of visible beauty are but a distant symbol. Thus does it mount, step by step, toward higher and more complete manifestations. Like those mothers whose brows are paled by suffering, but who have sometimes such adorable children, so in its nights of anguish, in the abyss of its misery, does human pain bring into the world these two sublime children—Hope and Faith. She rocks them on her knees, upon the ruins of the earth she croons to them the songs of eternity; she has made them stronger than death. And men, imprisoned under the leaden canopy of a fatal world, slaves of emptiness, have seen this perspective opened upon the sky, this

opening upon the infinite, without which it is no longer possible to breathe.

Pain finally has revealed to us another God. We adored impassive gods, arbitrary potters of a world which had not even the right to demand of them the reason for its fragility. We adored Olympian gods seated in the light of an immortal smile, in a joy which was undisturbed by the sighs of mortals. These gods have gone to rest, and upon their thrones mercy has seated itself. The spirit of consolation is the highest manifestation of God in mankind:

"You who weep, come to this God, for He weeps."

And now let us sum up in its entirety this declaration: "Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted." Let us endeavor to give it its full scope, for this word is an infinity. We have hardly explored even a few of its provinces. The eyes of Him who said it penetrated farther than ours into the mysterious depths of our destinies.

In pronouncing it, He unquestionably thought of those supreme reparations of which

God alone knows the secret, but without which a black shadow, nay, more than that, a blot, would remain upon His work. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted" is not only an allusion to the pain which is salutary, it is a promise of victory over the pain which is an enemy, over the pain which degrades, crushes out, and destroys. What shall we do for this promise? Shall we have sufficient decision not to quit at this point the hand of the guide who has conducted us so far? Shall we follow it through this obscurity from whence he predicts a dawn? That is the most difficult and the greatest step which remains to be taken. Let us take it, my Brothers. Let us accomplish this act of confidence and of courage. May the joy which we shall have in being able to believe in the word of Christ be an indication that in that direction an immense truth will be found. Let us not close the book upon the sorrows which are inexplicable. Let us not abandon those who have gone into the pit where man no longer distinguishes anything. Let us

give to God the credit of allowing Him the last word and even of repairing that which to us seems irreparable.

When religious thought endeavors to represent the course of things, it stops at these two extreme points: the creation and the final accomplishment. These two points are marked by the first and by the last page of the Bible. At the first, we see the wonderful dawn, the stars of the morning saluting their author, the new world emerging from white mists as the new-born in its swaddling-clothes.

Then come the long voyage, the obstacles, the struggle, the defeats, the tormented drama of history, the train of the ages now somber, now splendid, clambering to the heights and falling into the depths.

And then the end, the universal return to the house of the Father, and, after all the wrongs endured, the eternal reparation.

I know of nothing greater than this vision of the Apocalypse. This God suffering in our miseries, this Father who, during numberless centuries, has felt the sum of all anguish

experienced in detail by His children, giving of Himself freely, opening His arms wide for the reception of all. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

And the last, the most unhappy, those whose life shall have seemed to us a horrible folly, a pass without outlet, those whose cries shall be lost without an echo, shall be the first on the eternal day: "And there shall be no more deaths, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away."

XIII

A DOUBLE EXPERIENCE

For which cause we faint not, but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.—II Cor. IV., 16.

LET us reflect together upon the double experience described by St. Paul in his second epistle to the Corinthians, through a part of the fourth chapter, and which explains itself in concise form in these words I have quoted. It would hardly be possible to stop before a graver subject. It is not *a* question which he proposes to us, but *the* question. Our destiny depends upon the nature and the extent of the experience here pointed out. We all attempt it in its first part; if the second is not attempted, the balance-sheet of existence shows a deficit.

"The outward man perishes." Life charges us to prove it. Its lessons have this particular quality, that they are gratuitous and, in spite

of this, cost very dear. We all learn, by our expenditure, in paying with our person, in the full force of the expression, that is to say, in leaving our bodies and possessions behind us, that the outward man perishes.

As if to imprint itself more deeply, the lesson is repeated: to perish, to vanish, is almost second nature to him who has acquired the habit of living. A superficial opinion exprest on this point is that "one dies but once." How many times does one die before dying in reality, or rather before succeeding in dying? Do we not quit the earth with all those whom we have loved? Are not our ties on this side of the grave loosened, in proportion as our treasures are placed in the invisible? The bark moored to the shore is successively detached. One by one the moorings are cast off. To die is to sever the last strand. Frequently it is much frayed, and when it finally gives way the sails are already swelled by a breath from beyond.

Let us admit that you are ignorant of the meaning of such words, because you have

never felt a part of yourself take wing with the going-out of a life which you loved. If you had experienced this, you would certainly comprehend the perishing of the outward man by transformation. Under how many forms have we not vanished? Does the young child not vanish in order to make way for the youth? Ask the mothers. Which one of them, seeing upon her knees the figure of the child, fresh, laughing, framed in curls, surrounded with the charm of morning, that which is to childhood what the fairy of the dawn is to the breaking day—which one of them has not formed the secret wish: "Oh! if he might only remain thus!" The child, on the other hand, demands nothing but to grow. He seeks only happy changes and easy partings.

Rarely does youth turn back to childhood with regret. Has it not expanded the limits of its possession as a conquest, marched from conquered province to conquered province, always richer, fairer, more vibrating? And, nevertheless, when the first hardships of life come, the first contact with human sin and

wickedness, the deceptions which are felt more keenly when the heart is young, does not youth sometimes mourn its distant childhood with its wealth of illusion and its stainless purity?

When even youth is behind us, who can count the occasions upon which man has borne living testimony to the fact that vital evolution is accomplished by a series of destructions? When we undergo a change, is there not something in us which has come to an end? The oak bids good-by to its last year's foliage in order that the new may unfold. We also, in order to follow the progress of life, have good-bys to say. They are often painful. One does not change without suffering, even if the transformation were always to our advantage; but there are some changes which lead downward. Listen to the poet as he sings of the invasion of our heart by prosaic preoccupations and of the loss of generous ideas when the positive man has replaced the dreaming youth who was full of poetry and ideals:

"There exists in the majority of men
A poet, dead in his youth, of whom alone the man survives."

After maturity, experience holds full sway. We no sooner arrive at the summit of the hill than, upon the other side, the descent begins, gradual at first, but with an inexorable tendency to become steeper. In climbing the hill, the days were counted by their acquisitions. The steps of the descent are marked by their losses. One by one the provinces of our empire are taken from us. In all forms of its manifestations the physical being is on the decline. The horizon of our forces contracts. There is a general recoil upon the vision and the hearing, upon pleasure, the appetite, and the movements, upon muscular energy and the vividness of impressions. It is the time when others seek to please us by complimenting us upon our retention of youth, because as much of that as remains to us surprizes our friends. And the time comes when man goes about repeating: "I am no longer the same."

And yet this is only the beginning, the mild form and faint premonitory symptom of decrepitude. Much that is good still remains. We hold our own bravely in this onset of war. We dispute every foot of the land with the scouts of the enemy sent ahead to open hostilities. Having escaped unscathed from the first encounter, we regain confidence in our powers of resistance. During this time the enemy is working against us in secret. The invisible army which mounts to the assault of life has not only laid siege to the gates of the city, but has information of the interior. In the very center of the self, its engines of war are building and its sappers are undermining us. That is the great misery. One could console oneself for the decline of physical vigor, but how accept the moral eclipse, the intellectual decadence? When, driven back from bastion to bastion to the last entrenchment, we barricade ourselves in the heart of the citadel, in the domain of the spiritual life, we too frequently find destruction installed in the sanctuary. What has become of this fair

intelligence, the vast inheritance of knowledge, the penetrating gaze? What has become of the firm will?

Light has given place to twilight and firmness to the spirit of fear. And of what value in this disastrous liquidation will the ideas we have received be to us except as the inner man is blended with a brilliant intellectual equipment, or with precious virtues? For the evidence itself proves it to us. For each rare and privileged being who reserves, renews, and augments his spiritual light in the face of outward defeat, how many are there who go down in intellectual disaster and moral darkness?

To continue, there is worse than this. That we should be the spectators of our own destruction can be rigorously set down as a fatality, and man can conquer and surmount fatality by resignation and faith. But certain ones are themselves the workers of their destruction. Who will console us for the falling away which is caused by our wills; for that devastation which man, eaten up with vanity

and superficiality, calls down upon himself? That is no longer solely old age, however sad and discouraging; it is bankruptcy, it is suicide. Here decadence and death no longer appear as the result of an inevitable wear and tear, but the true and avenging word is accomplished. "The wages of sin is death."

Do not say to me: "That is an old man's croaking. It is useless thus to cloud young lives. Nothing will be changed in this order of things. In awaiting our turn to go to the mill, let us enjoy the present. Eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die!"

Do you not feel what a miserable palliative such counsels offer us toward saving us from the emptiness which is preying upon us? What difference is there between the plaint of the aged upon the rapid flight of days and the joyous songs of youth which has only the light of its eyes and the warmth of its blood for happiness? Is not this joy the very source of the plaints of the old? Are not these songs the clear soprano which is accompanied from the foot of the ladder by a melancholy bass?

With such a conception of life, looking only at visible things, installing oneself in cut-and-dried opinions, all riches are but a preface of misery, all possessions tend toward ruin. We arrive to be sent back; we are created to vanish; we grow to be destroyed. What is accomplished by all this satisfaction at being here, all this effort to remain here, all this personal desire which fills our days with ambition? The extension of our vulnerable surface. The greater the glory of the flesh with which our forms are surrounded, the more pitiable shall be our downfall.

Man is a candidate for emptiness. That is the entire philosophy contained in our destiny —regarding it in a certain aspect. And I hear old practical Wisdom murmuring in my ears with his gruff voice: "What misery, and what a pity is the life of men!"

Oh! the treasures which moths do not corrupt nor thieves break through and steal!

Where art thou, thou figure of this mask, thou meaning of this enigma, thou soul of this changing phantasmagoria?

To what must we cling to escape this horrible rust which destroys the most brilliant metal?

This is what can not be told to us by vulgar livers who empty the contents of existence as one drains a flask; nor by the common herd of creatures of routine who hasten toward the grave mechanically, slowly divested of all that they have received. This is what can not be told us completely, even by the wise who honor in every man the intangible kernel which becomes more and more luminous; for, to our sorrow be it said, in many of us the inner man seems already to have perished while the outward man continues to live. All these, after all, see in life nothing but itself, base or noble, earthly or sublime. And their aim can be only the preserving of life. They are preservers of themselves, of their treasures, of their gifts, of that which they are and of that which they have received. Their efforts are unavailing in the face of the universal obligation to leave all behind them. There is no exception to this law; all is de-

manded of us again. It is a waste of energy to wish to keep anything. And, according to the great and profound word of Christ which summed up the sorrowful enigma of life: "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it." We must therefore seek counsel elsewhere than where the tendency for preservation holds sway, where riches consist of treasures amassed and possest, no matter how spiritual these treasures may be. The adherents of life for life's sake have short-sighted wisdom, brutally belied by facts. Let us go to the masters of profound life. They teach far-sighted wisdom, a wisdom of heroic effort. They will have pity upon our misery and reveal to us the law which delivers from instead of that which reduces to slavery.

And this is what they say to us: the fundamental error, the capital heresy which harasses humanity unto its last stronghold, is to think that life is a treasure to be retained and that we must cling to it and love it for itself. The lesson of things which the outward man gives us in perishing is that life is there as a goal

higher than itself. It is a means, and not in itself an end. In such measure as man considers life a treasure to be laid up, in such measure shall he remain subordinate to the outward man who perishes and whose earthly form vanishes. He must be transposed from that which perishes to that which endures, not by a jealous conservation, but by the gift of himself. To wish to preserve oneself is like condemning oneself to the desire to prevent the brook from running, the hour from passing, the flowers from fading. To offer oneself, to give oneself, to employ and consecrate oneself is to save one's life in accomplishing its object. The inner man is the tie which binds each one of us to God, it is the place assigned to Him in the eternal plan and the supreme will. The inner man is created by all the acts and all the situations in which we realize the divine intentions in regard to us.

His birth is painful as are all births. It is accomplished by separations and by lacerations. If you do not become a new being, you remain in the outward man who perishes.

Your hope is in that which you possess and which you are destined inevitably to lose. If you renounce yourself, renounce the fallacious hope of preserving yourself, and if you make the great decision to give yourself up, you will by this step bridge the abyss. Here is the formula which St. Paul seeks to unveil to us who are held in thraldom by the short-sighted science of self-preservation. This formula is symbolized in the cross. The cross proclaims the law of the higher life—a law which is painful but liberating. In terms of unceasingly renewed variety, those who have come in contact with this law seek to define it to us. We have need of their assistance. And yet, who dreams of learning that which they teach? Their efforts are also, for the most part, unavailing. To comprehend them we must have already passed the stage in which they seek to give us our bearings. Thus is our experience ready to be opposed to theirs, as reality to Utopia and common sense to folly. And we maintain the right in our bankruptcy against their prosperity.

The old misery of humanity cries out always in each one of us. And all those who are cast down by this emptiness, and satiated with this vanity, thirst for that which endures. These are the disciples which the masters of the larger life have need of, provided their thirst is not made up solely of desire but of decision also. To carry to one's lips the ever refreshing water, one must be ready to pay it its price and to believe no longer in cisterns which are cracked. Irresolute hearts never employ for their cure a heroic remedy, for they consider it more terrible than the disease itself. Listen to the declaration: "We have the spirit of faith, while we look not at the things which are seen but at the things which are not seen. We are troubled on every side, yet not distrest; we are perplexed but not in despair; cast down but not destroyed, always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body."

Through these words it clearly appears that the inward man is not to be confounded with

a well-nurtured spirit—a life in full bloom such as is often encountered under the very ruins of our material happiness and of our physical health. St. Paul and all those who have experienced real life know that it depends upon no condition, not even on that which we ordinarily call the health of the soul. The believer who chanted the old psalm, which I love to repeat to myself in the translation of Luther, has already cried: "As long as thou remainest to me I demand nothing more of heaven or earth; my body and my soul can be spent with misery, but thou remainest none the less, O God, the consolation of my heart and of my being." This is an essential point; otherwise we are lost in the cases where we assist at the moral decline, at the intellectual eclipse of men who were lately in possession of an admirable life of the soul.

The resources of faith must increase in proportion to human needs, according to the beautiful word: "For when I am weak, then I am strong," and the other: "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels." There are

uses for misery in which nothing more remains visible of that which so rejoiced us in the triumph of the spirit over the outward fatalities, and it is in these uses of misery that the servants of God appear to us the greatest. There it is no longer a question of spiritual ascendency, of extraordinary and almost miraculous power of the soul. No more can be said of the excellence of states of the soul, of the perceptible presence of God, nor of that inner joy which passes all understanding. It is no longer by the favor of the hour that we measure our power, or that of the loved ones around us. We no longer say: God has saved and protected us, here and there, everywhere where we have escaped disaster or received benefits. We say to ourselves: In spite of all and always, be we above the sod or underneath, living or dead, in the lion's den, in the furnace, in decrepitude, God saves us always even if we have perished. To die and to be destroyed for the good cause is to place in security all that which one is and all that which one has, without allowing the least part to fall to earth.

But our province here is to speak of the progress toward this life of perfect giving of which the joyful and total sacrifice is but the culminating point. There is a struggle for the inner life as well as an instinctive and animal struggle for the conservation of the outward means of existence. In this struggle we recognize different degrees and an apprenticeship. We must learn proficiency in it. The process of getting our bearings is only the commencement. At first the giving of self, the primary sacrifice and the disposition to offer oneself, must be learned. Then it is a question of installing in this life an order quite different from the old one. A law against which there is no possible action forbids our considering ourselves as conquerors.

We remain always combatants. The position of the soldier in retreat is incompatible with the conditions of this struggle. To seat oneself definitely upon the side of the road, to constitute oneself a landed proprietor after wealth has been gained, that which is the ideal of a commonplace well-being, is here

prohibited. We are forbidden to live upon our incomes in the kingdom of God; one lives solely by his labor and by his perpetual consecration. Those who wish to lead the life which moths do not corrupt and which those formidable thieves, whose names are time, disease, old age, and death, can not steal, know well that it is necessary to be constantly on the alert. They understand the permanent danger to which every man is exposed, of letting himself fall into the outward and superficial, and to build upon the sand. "Watch and pray" is their virile motto. On this condition the inner man is renewed from day to day.

Let us admit that this is neither the ideal of the majority of men, nor even that of religious men in general. This gospel is further in a large part veiled from our eyes. To be convinced of it, it is only necessary to consider the reputedly superior morality which we teach to our children and which serves as the reflection of our own views. It rests confidently upon a system of recompenses, or pun-

ishments admirably characterized by the commandment: "Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee," and by a host of passages in the Old as well as in the New Testament, the summing up of which is this: "Obey the laws and the commandments that thou mayest be happy, thou and thy children after thee." Against this code of morals there is nothing to say. It is a law of life that good shall be derived from good and evil from evil. When understood only in this way, existence appears to us as wealth to be stored up. Success is under compulsion to crown good lives. To receive is the great motto. And despair and discouragement are our lot wherever the old idyl is found wanting. Such morality is comparable to a ladder which is too short. Nothing is more useful in ordinary cases. But as soon as the height of facts exceeds the height of the ladder, all issue and all resource are cut off from us.

We and our children must convert ourselves to a different conception of life. In place of

the advantages of regular conduct, we must show them the dangers to be braved if they wish to be just; we must accustom them to the morality of the splendid risk in which they are taught that the just have much to suffer; we must make them understand the word of Christ which promises persecution to those who have left all to follow Him. It is a heroic morality, the only one which is accountable for great upheavals, and the only one which liberates hearts, the only one which leads us through the valley of the shadow of death, where the outward man perishes, to a glorious end. We are all pledged to the most humiliating servitudes, all reduced to trembling for that which we are, which we have and possess, all slaves of fear and emptiness, until the day when we accomplish the substitution of the morality of acquisition, of possession, and of conservation, by that of active sacrifice wholly sanctioned by love. There we are rich in all that we have given, and possess nothing more really than that which we have willingly lost. May all that which we have, and all that which

we are, be transformed into love, as oil, in consuming itself, is transformed into light. Thus shall we enter upon the movement of liberation which brings forth life from death. And we shall be brothers and joint inheritors of Christ and of all the victorious vanquished who have healed us by their suffering, created light for us by their darkness, and by their crushing out have left bread for souls as the grain of wheat ground in the mill.

Man is a knight. All the gifts of life are conferred upon him that he may use them upon earth. Here is the helmet; here are the breastplate and the sword; here are the generous heart and the strong arm. If he gives himself up to the desire for preserving all this intact, time will wrench it from him as the stripes are cut away from an unworthy soldier, and his end will be nothing but a hideous degradation. But if he makes the intended use of it and hurls himself into battle without looking backward, then the helmet can roll to earth, the breastplate be shattered into a thousand pieces, the broken sword fall from

his hands. Do not lament; regret nothing, the goal is attained. The combatant can fall in peace, in saying with St. Paul: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness."

XIV

THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY HIS FAITH[1]

I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, . . . And the Lord answered me and said: . . . "The just shall live by his faith."—Habakkuk, II., 1–4.

MY Brothers, in ancient times races were arranged in which bearers of torches ran. When one of the champions became exhausted, and at the moment when he was in danger of falling, he gave the torch into the hands of another who was still fresh and ready to be off. This one carried it farther and, in his turn, confided it to a third.

The word which you are about to hear, and which is put into the very mouth of God: "The Just shall live by his Faith," is, in the history of religious humanity, comparable to one of those torches which were transmitted from hand to hand.

[1] Preached November 5, 1905, upon the Feast of the Reformation.

The old prophet was upon his watch. That is where we must be to hear the Word of God. He was upon the tower; he had mounted beyond the muttered rumors of the earth, without estranging himself in sympathy from his people, and he watched. He watched with senses and intelligence fixt upon that which he might see; he was disposed to gather in all light and all instruction which should be given him.

As it appears in his book, this prophet lived at a time of violence and of bloody wars. When he looked around him, he doubtless often asked himself what the God in whom he believed was doing in the midst of these hazardous conflicts.

Harken to these cries of a soul in anguish: "O Lord, how long shall I cry and thou wilt not hear! how long cry out unto thee of violence and thou wilt not save! Wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?"

From the depths where the souls of men border on the divine, this reply ascends: "The Just shall live by his Faith."

The term faith is taken here in a twofold sense. It speaks at first of the confidence in the Eternal who declares: "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie; tho it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

Faith, further, means fidelity; the Just shall live, on the one hand, by confidence in God and the limitless credit which he accords Him; on the other hand, by the simple fidelity in little things, the duties and pains of every day.

Having received this revelation, the prophet concludes: "I have heard. O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years! And I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble. Yet I will rejoice in the Lord. The Lord God is my strength. He will make me to walk upon mine high places."

Centuries passed, and now, behold us at the time when St. Paul, he who was cast out by

all the synagogs, believed in a crucified One, of whom nothing remained if not maledictions on the lips of His enemies, who were certain of having conquered Him; and, in the hearts of his friends, a creed, a true creed, but very timorous. For the most part, these trembling disciples risked endangering, in old bottles, the destiny of the new wine which Christ had poured into the human soul.

It was no longer a national or a political question which was propounded, similar to that which preoccupied the ancient prophet, posted as a guardian upon the tower of the city. It was a problem of the inner life, of justice before God. How can we free ourselves from the ancient stain which covers us like a mantle of infamy and courses through our veins as a noxious poison? How can we succeed in reconciling ourselves with God?

Upon the ruins of the old law or, rather, the old legal formality in which he believed passionately, a man, feeling the shelter of a revered temple crumbling about him, sought a new country. And when, weary of soul, he

fell by the wayside, a gentle and fatherly voice murmured to him: "The Just shall live by his Faith."

Then, martyr preaching martyr, persecuted preaching persecuted, by the divine power vested in this word, he conquered the earth for the Crucified.

And centuries passed again. The old civilized world, with its beliefs and its gods, descended into the grave. They had already felt its obscurity in that perfume of death which gradually impregnated all things and withered all hope. Barbaric peoples crowded the earth, forgetful of the ancient letters, the language of which they no longer comprehended, becoming dull before the splendid ruins, the beauties of which left their uncultivated vigor untouched.

But a new world was fermenting in their depths and slowly ripened toward its blossoming. Then, before the future, impatient to live, the immense shadow of the Church loomed up. She, who lately had created light, now created night. She who had brought

forth the peoples to the spiritual life pretended, now that they had become adults, to continue to support them, but in an unworthy minority. The mother was transformed into a step-mother.

Then came times of distress and spiritual famine. Worn out, contaminated, the old provisions with which the human soul had been nourished lost their value. Bread was changed to stone. Renewed labor and a new sowing became necessary. To quench thirst, the lost road to the wells had to be found again and, to procure air, the gates of the sanctuary must needs be reopened by the breath of the Spirit.

In response to these labors, men of good faith sprang up. There a German, child of the people, son of a father whose profession was to extract lead and silver from the depths of mines; here a Frenchman, offspring of a cultivated family, having close acquaintance with the highest refinement of the Catholic Church. Others appeared from all parts of the earth, from all the spheres of thought, in

all the walks of life. But one word of command united them and shone upon their banners. It was the old word resuscitated: "The Just shall live by his Faith."

It is impossible for humanity to live indefinitely upon provisions gathered in other days, by bread baked centuries ago: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread"; that is the law, not only in the material, but in the spiritual domain.

Man is forbidden, by an authority higher than all human conventions, to live upon his income in the domain of the spirit, to be forever the son supported by his father, to sleep in indolence, and to eat of the labor of others. If he himself does not labor, his riches will be corrupt and his capital become unproductive. He must clear the field, turn the sod, sort out the grain, in order to separate that which is no longer viable from the grain of good quality which is to be confided to the well-prepared furrows. Sower full of faith, he must associate, through labor, with the God of the morrow, with the God of the sun and the rain, of

the white harvests hoped for in the future, with the God who puts the white bread into the begrimed hands of the laborer.

Luther and Calvin and all those of their following set themselves to the work. They had against them the jeering and the opposition of an ancient routine, sure of itself, and always ready to discourage young hopes. They had against them the ancient night which wished to endure always, the fanatic hatred of the men of the Church, the fear of the sheep-like spirits which are terrified by the unknown. They had against them the refined wisdom of the new disciples of Greece and Rome, full of contempt for the Gospel of simplicity as preached by fishermen in a language devoid of estheticism. They had against them all those who adored, in the splendor of the arts, the supreme truth and for whom the moral beauty was eclipsed by the splendor of the flesh. And, above all, they had against them the impetuous young disciples, traveling faster than the masters and the momentary disorder, without which it is

impossible to repair ancient edifices or to build new ones.

But, in their struggles and their trials, the Eternal spoke to them and said: "Listen to me, my children. I am the God of the prophets and of the apostles. When they are on the watch and are set upon the tower, I speak to men whose souls are open. I am He who is often dead, as the sun dies in setting, but who always returns as the sun returns in the east. I am He who has been persecuted, tormented, and exiled by all nations. Anathema has been cried out upon me by the churches, the senates, the synagogs. But I am greater than their words and their formulas. I am the architect of the divine City which is in no way built by the hand of man and of which the most venerated sanctuary is but a distant symbol."

"Harken to me, fear nothing, stand upon your watch, mark well the vision and write it."

And they harkened. No longer was here a tame God, piously embellished by hands paled by the shadows of sacristies; no longer

a heraldic God, encrusted in the venerable casket of some confession of faith, but living and human, contemporary, collaborator, and companion of each one, forging with the smith, seeking with the searcher, making Himself a child with children; a God who, at evening, sheds the light of His stars down upon the pillows that the little ones may feel Him near to each one of them; a God whose name is rung out by the village bells as the mountain breezes sway them upon their ropes; a God who sings in the nests of the birds, but who weeps with those that weep and pardons the poor sinner overwhelmed with his sins; a God who speaks to the consciences of the just, stirred up by iniquity, and to which an unknown force is given to cry upon the housetops that which is only whispered, to reproach Israel with its iniquities, to speak in the presence of the great and not to be silent even in the lion's den.

This is what, in its essence, the Reformation was. The dead and buried God, bound with bonds of mummified tradition, came to

life in the young men and was manifested in undreamed-of creations, in vibrant and courageous humanity. For by this sign is the Master of Life recognized: When His Spirit is reborn in a place, it restores in its servants the forgotten courage to be men again.

My Brothers, we are their sons and that is our glory. Let it not be our pride, but, on the contrary, an appeal to the feeling of a greater responsibility. Let us remember the stern words of Christ, when He said to the Jews who were boasting too pretentiously of their descent from Abraham: "And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham for our father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."

If we wish to be on our watch, we must give ourselves the trouble to set ourselves upon the tower; to watch and take notice of the signs of the times. The same voice which guided the fathers is ready to speak to us.

The world finds itself, at present, in a criti-

cal state, but interesting and inspiring in the utmost. The believers who understand and love their time disinterestedly can become the successors of those who have carried the torch of faith down through history. The living faith is regenerative, mother of sturdy and beautiful children, each having a different form. It is pious and reveres the ancient forms of all true adoration. But it goes beyond the words of men, beyond all the expressions of creeds. It worships in the higher sanctuary, the star-studded vault of which extends above the highest spires and the loftiest arches. By the spirit of faith, refreshed at its very source, we can become not only the inheritors of the stedfastness of our fathers, but the instruments of God; we can be endowed, in the midst of our activity, with that particular power which requires no other proof than itself, which marches, evolves, and proves itself by its own energy, and lifts the human soul before enabling it to move mountains.

Man is the victim of a strange error. Son of a king, he lives as a beggar. All the riches

of heaven are in his soul, and he allows himself to die of hunger.

We must set ourselves upon the tower, stand upon our watch, listen to what God says to us. One thing certain is that this time, such as it is, with its difficulties, its uncertainties, its very faults and errors, is precisely the time which God has given us to live, love, and labor in. This fact defines the measure of our duty and of our resources. Shall we be sent to battle without arms or provisions? We should have stronger confidence in the supreme Chief and march under His banner, and we then shall feel springing up, in the depths of our souls, an unquenchable fountain.

The Just shall live by his Faith.

An immense pity takes possession of us when we consider upon what men live. Certain ones have investigated the homes of the poor, and have studied the condition of families in extreme necessity. One is horrified to see what privations they endure.

But in the domain of the spirit, it is infinitely sadder.

There, there are many who have, for their only meal, bones which have already been gnawed in the time of our ancestors. Others are seated before bread which was fresh in its time; but it is now so stale that it has become too hard for their teeth. Others live upon pure illusion and vanity; others by hate, not finding existence interesting unless they can detest some one, work against this one, speak evil of that one. Lastly, there are others who live by pride; who deck themselves in their rags as in the mantle of a king, despising every one who does not wear their livery.

Upon what do men live? Upon what do we live? Who lives by his faith? Who has drunk at the source of which Christ says: "But whosoever drinketh of the waters that I shall give him shall never thirst"?

For the most part, with religious men themselves, faith is only a decorative supplement of a situation which is prosperous by other means, something like a beautiful view from a comfortable estate; but it is not the essential thing. Some believe in a God of pleasant

days, in a Lord who gives them possessions, health, or cures them of a sickness. Others, perhaps, lift themselves a little higher. They believe in a God who, in certain particular cases which touch the imagination and the heart, accords deliverances similar to that accorded Daniel cast into the den and whom the lions spared, and to the three men thrown into the furnace, whom the fire respected.

But they do not believe in the God of those overcome by darkness, by failure, by misfortune, and by ruin. They do not believe in the God who lies down with us in the grave in order to make it less dark. After having adored the miracle of a glorious and liberating deed, they do not lift themselves to the God in whom we must continue to believe, when the lions devour the prophets, when the fire consumes the martyrs, and when the world, following its accustomed and inexorable march, passes as a juggernaut over our hearts and our hopes. He does not believe in a God who dispenses with miracles, the only God, nevertheless, who remains to us in the hours

of despair when nothing else comes to our aid. In a word, they have not the faith which consists in looking into the bottomless pit and throwing oneself into it, saying to the Eternal: "In spite of all I belong to thee, and my life is in thy hands." They believe in God under certain conditions, but they have no faith in Him without conditions.

Others hang their faith upon the paragraphs of a catechism, and, when certain points become less sure in their spirit, they see their confidence in God waning, and hasten to declare: We have lost our faith. No, you have not lost your faith, you have lost the deeds which represent land. But these lands are among those which must be regained by personal labor. Without this labor, no matter how old your titles may be, they guarantee you nothing. They are no more than protested papers. The faith which nourishes its man, the faith which saves, is not a second-hand faith, even if it should be legitimatized by the signatures and the seals of the most ancient tradition. It is the direct faith. It

was not without a deliberate intention that it was written: The Just shall live by *his* Faith —by his personal faith, become a part of his blood and of his bone, and not by a faith of convention, vaguely adopted upon the indorsement of others. This faith alone is both divine and human, capable of being transposed into signs and words of all times, but, at the same time, greater than those words and signs. It was this faith that the prophets foresaw, which Jesus brought upon the earth, which all those who have lived in it have drunk of freely.

You will have need of it every day, and never more than at an epoch of crises and mutations as that of to-day. Is it not lamentable to think that the happiness of a man, and perhaps his faith in God, depends upon a letter given to him by the letter-carrier and which contains his destiny? When he has tremblingly broken the seal of this fateful letter, he will cry: My Lord and my God! or he will give way in declaring, There is no God!

Nevertheless, these situations present themselves and you know examples of them.

And we would depend, in that which concerns the treasure of faith, upon any event, be it great or small! We would depend upon something which scholars, to-morrow, may exhume from the tombs of the Orient, or find in a dusty corner! We would depend upon something which an individual or a group can deny or affirm regarding a passage in the Bible! In a word, we would depend upon an accident! But in this event, we would be the most unfortunate of mortals. That which happens when the earth trembles is what can befall us one fine day; when all our calculations are upset because the center of gravity is no longer at the same point.

No, the Just shall live by his Faith, independently of all happenings.

Christ has said: Believe, fear nothing, have confidence! I come to thee, messenger of immortal goodness, to say to thee, in thy misery and thy oblivion, that some one thinks of thee.

I come to pass my hand over the dust which obliterates the signature of God in thy soul.

Fear nothing, man can think nothing which will prevent the existence of God; fear nothing; man can say nothing which will prevent God from loving thee. Fear neither the day, nor the night, nor men, nor the morrow, nor the past! Fear nothing; only believe! that will suffice thee for thy march. Go forward and be faithful in the smallest things! Confidence in God shall remain fruitless if thou crownest it not with confidence in thyself, in thy poverty, and in thy misery, by which thou art able to glorify God. The homage which thou must render unto Him is to believe in His presence, hidden in the poor recesses of thy trembling humanity. If thou believest not in thyself, if thou considerest thyself as a negligible quantity, if thou art convinced that, for instance, the chapter of humanity which is being written at this moment is destined to be blotted out and not to belong to the whole; if thou doubtest God at such a moment of history, thy faith shall be nothing more than a

broken chain. Harken to the voice which speaks to the prophet: "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end, it shall speak and not lie; tho it tarry, wait for it!"

We must give credit to God,[1] a limitless credit.

This word is what we have need of, in our poverty, our misery, our ignorance, under our burdens, beside the graves where we mourn, amid the ruins of the earth and the changes which are accomplished about us. May this also be the word of command at this turning-point of our religious history.

Those among you who are, not only by old habits, but also by affection and by real attachment, children of this old Reformed Church of France, are especially preoccupied, at present, with their destinies. They must gather themselves together. The ancient prophet invites them to set themselves with him upon the tower, where he stands upon his watch. Let us follow him; he will say simple and

[1] "Faith is the voluntary throwing of oneself upon the bounty of God which passes all understanding," says Luther.

great things to us. He will tell us that the future does not depend upon the ill-will of a man or of a group; it does not depend upon our errors, nor even upon our clear-sightedness. The future is in the hands of the Eternal.

Let us rest assured, let us fear only one thing—not to be on our watch. There are those who trust in their riches for the future. There are those who despise themselves for their poverty. These are two forms of the same idolatry and the same incredulity. We must build upon God alone and upon mutual fidelity, the filial sentiment which binds man to man and which does not permit us to doubt that God speaks to others as He speaks to us.

Confide yourselves to God! Become incredulous of the earthly things in which you believe too strongly, and convert yourself to the things from on high in which you can not believe strongly enough; convert yourself from creeds to faith, from men to God! Be true sons of the spirit! Then there is nothing to risk for yourselves or for your children.

Your duty is to hold yourselves accountable for that which God has said to your fathers, for that which He has said to yourselves, for that which God has given to your fathers and to yourselves; to be the faithful stewards of it and to employ it to the best of your epoch. It is not here a question of administering a collective egoism, under the influence of which your Church will be, above all, engrossed with the conservation of itself. You are the salt of the earth; you must busy yourself in spreading yourself. In this way, you will be really on your watch, and useful to your time.

I have wished to make these reflections here among you as one would make them in the midst of one's family, upon a day when the recollection of a beloved relative returns to one, when chairs are drawn nearer around the fire, the glow of which speaks of the past and of the future.

May the Eternal bless each one of you in his particular life, above all those who tremble the most and have the most need of His

mighty hand to learn simple confidence and great security. May He give you, in your rank of members of the Church of France, a confident, broad, and brotherly heart, that it may be given to you to contribute toward the building of the new house.

Thus we shall not let fall from our hands the torch which the prophets carried, which Christ took from them, which He made to flame as the sun and which He confided to the hands of His disciples, from age to age, in saying:

"I will be with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

XV

PENTECOST

Sorrow hath filled your heart. . . . Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you. . . . I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth. . . . —John, XVI.

MY Brothers: To-day is Pentecost. The Feast of Pentecost is associated with the very origin of our Church—of the Christian Church, of the universal Church. There took place, on this day, a unique and most impressive phenomenon, which we shall attempt to depict to ourselves and the enduring characters of which we shall endeavor to decipher. By this means we shall profit, as much as possible and in proportion to our needs which are very great, profit by all the spiritual grace which such a recital contains. It is, in fact, an account of men like ourselves, who lived this same life and whose immortal souls were enclosed in the same mortal and perish-

able frame of the sky above our heads and of the earth which often trembles beneath our feet.

Here, in substance, is what Pentecost says to us: Memorable events had taken place. Christ had come; He had walked upon earth among men. He had sown the seed of His word and of His thought in the spirits of those who were willing to listen to Him; He had fulfilled His mission by deeds and by suffering to the very end, the death upon the Cross. And then there came to pass that startling and luminous phenomenon which glowed in the depths of the tomb and which we call the Resurrection, accompanied by all sorts of visions, of apparitions, and of striking events, the character of which, partly spiritual, partly physical, is difficult to determine, but which, nevertheless, shook the souls of the disciples to the very depths.

Otherwise, from this whole life of Christ, from all this dwelling together of the disciples with the Son of Man, whose hands and heart were full of eternal treasures; from all the

bloody tragedy of Calvary, from that complete victory over death, no conclusion would have been arrived at. The disciples were, at first, inert, silent, and solitary; they shared among themselves the heart-breaking feeling that events had taken place to which there would be no sequel.

Then, suddenly, comes Pentecost, and among these men, joined by the same grief, united by the same reverent memory, we see manifested a spirit of courage, of joy, of action, and of conquest. We see the results of all the things which had taken place before. Nothing was dead! everything had been only sleeping, and was now brought to life by the breath of the spirit.

Then they remembered what Christ had said to them, that it was necessary that He should go. Up to that moment there had been confusion in the minds of the disciples between the man and the spirit.

A man had walked before them and they had followed him. It was necessary that they should learn no longer to follow a man, for

man returns to dust at his appointed hour, and it is only the spirit that endures.

Therefore, after having followed in the footsteps of the man whose hands they had touched, whose glowing words they had heard ringing through the surrounding air, whose divinity they had felt under His human form, whose luminous gaze was fixed upon the world to come, it was necessary that they should be separated from this man, who, in spite of all, succumbed in His outward form to the law of the time. They had need of being converted to the spirit which spoke through this man, to the God who was within Him, to the immortal and everlasting future which His frail humanity covered. They had to become converted to the spirit of which His flaming word was the messenger, and this conversion is always difficult.

It occurred in the following manner: the Lord had said to them: "A little while and ye shall not see me." And they saw Him no more.

When the disciples were with Him, and He

spoke to them, nothing was clearer to them than not only His person and His authority, but the truths which He expounded.

Do you not recall, my Brothers, how many times we have felt these things? When we find ourselves with certain people, we are calm and even believing, because those people are for us the link between our misery and the eternal forces, between our darkness and the light of God.

So then, when the disciples found themselves in the presence of Christ, they possest all things. In Him they had all, for Christ was all to them. While He spoke, they breathed the breath of God. While He expounded the Scriptures to them, the Old Testament shone before their eyes as a book engraved in rays of light.

And then He vanished and they doubted Him.

So prodigious was the emptiness of the frame where His figure had appeared, that they found themselves for a time face to face with a void. They gazed stupidly about them

in the shadow and in the night. It seemed as if they had seen a star plunge into the abyss. In a little while they even asked themselves if this star had ever existed, whether they had ever seen it, and they were so shaken that He who had departed, and whom they had seen again, became uncertain to them. Did they believe in Him or not? They loved Him always; but His power, His authority, His position in the world, were questioned. Perhaps there was no longer even a question. They no longer asked themselves; they wept; they wept over the dust, over that which had been so fair and which now no longer existed. And the saying was fulfilled: "A little while and ye shall not see me." They saw Him no more.

But Christ had added: "And again, a little while, and ye shall see me."

Then gradually—for the Resurrection is nothing if it is not accomplished in our hearts—gradually He came to life in their souls.

The glorious morning of that third day, at first an outward phenomenon, became for

them an event of the soul. Light penetrated their inner darkness. Through the tomb and the triumph of enemies, through the brutal process of man's perishing, through the silence where His voice was no longer heard, through their sorrowing memories, something became light. His figure emerged from the mists and that indescribable warmth of heart which they had sometimes felt when He gazed at them face to face, when He touched their hands, when He was for them the living interpretation of the eternal truth, this warmth took possession of them; they no longer followed the man; they began to follow in His luminous wake.

More and more, as the light spread and the power within them grew, they understood that they now held the key of the invisible, that they followed the Spirit. All that was human, visible, transitory, crucified, and vanquished in Christ was, after all, but the translation into mortal language of an immortal truth. They comprehended that all those things which had a time and a place were, in short, beyond all

times and all places, that they belonged to eternity, that they were part of a world in which nothing begins and nothing ends. They understood that, at a definite moment, they had possest the plenitude of immense and infinite wealth and that, if they could elevate their faith to the height of that which was offered them, it would come to pass as Christ had foretold: "I will not leave you comfortless. I will remain with you until the end of the world."

Nearer and nearer, uniting together as one man and one soul, communing together, repeating His words, they became accustomed to feeling that He was in the midst of them, altho He was not there in the body, nor even in that mysterious form in which He had appeared to them at times, in spite of closed doors. They became accustomed to possessing Christ, not in the flesh but in the spirit.

The time came when they were able, not only to comfort themselves, to feel that He was not dead, that nothing which they mourned was lost, but when they became con-

scious that a superhuman force spoke to them, inspired and impelled them, so that they were unable to resist it. The hour struck when those who had been silent began to speak, when the timid became courageous, when those who had felt a spiritual void received the fulness of the spirit of God, and this was the beginning. Calvary had a sequel; the Resurrection, a result.

The conclusion of all the things which had transpired was henceforth drawn. Christ, with His disciples, was to march through the entire course of the world's history and be as one alive, He being the vine and they the branches. For—and here lies the point for us—men of the present, this is not at all a unique thing which happened at a certain time and which, historically corroborated and cataloged, slumbers in ancient parchments among traditions and recollections and which belongs to a time or a place. It is a permanent fact which will always continue to have results.

In the first place, in order to build a bridge between your mind and the subject which

concerns us, I am going to talk to you about that which takes place when we lose some one we dearly love, above all if that some one has been not only a person loved, but a forceful being, a being full of vitality, one who has taught us to live, who has shed light in our soul, and through whose loss our heart has been plunged into darkness.

It comes to all those who have sincerely and deeply loved and who have received much, that they suddenly find themselves disabled by the departure of those who were their masters, their life; to whom they so willingly appealed for guidance. At the moment, they are completely demoralized. But if the lesson which death inflicts upon us is fully grasped, if the right conclusions are drawn from it, if the love has been true and still remains so, if the fidelity is simple and sincere, slowly, from the mourning, from the shadow and from the sadness, there emanate the figures of those who have departed. Altho the dust has claimed its own, our heart kindles at their remembrance and they come to dwell within us,

and they come to speak to us and to meet us upon unfrequented paths; and sometimes the things which our memory recalls are stronger and surer than that which they said to us when they were still here. Every word of man is stamped with a fragility which comes from his mortal and fallible nature. But when words have been filtered through the great filter of death, they reappear pure, they be come a limpid truth which no dust can cover and which can not be sealed by the granite slab of any tomb. And the words of those who have departed have then more effect, more insinuating and more penetrating force than they had when they were near us. It seems as if their spirit had grown by their final absence.

You have had this experience, you who mourn and truly love, for love does not recognize the barrier which pitiless and brutal death throws across our horizon. Love surmounts the barrier; love has white wings which it spreads in the azure to follow after those who have departed. Love has within itself some-

thing to bridge the distance between the shadow in which we dwell and the light into which they have gone.

These are experiences which are still daily taking place in the souls of men. It is enough to be an honest, simple, and complete man, to have no shame in one's humanity, neither to destroy nor corrupt it, by injecting into it the corrosive fluid of an imprisoned and restless reasoning which resists the solicitations of the facts themselves. It is not enough to be prepared, overrefined; one must remain simple in order that these phenomena may take place in one's soul untrammeled. Not only do they take place, but it is indispensable that they should take place. And that is what we are endeavoring to make clear.

In the school of life man must learn to turn from the ephemeral to the eternal, from the visible to the invisible, and from men to the spirit; otherwise nothing will have been accomplished; our Calvaries will produce no fruits and the fairest Easters, the happiest deliverances, will be without result. The

finest texts which we have before us and which recall the past to us will be dead letters, if they are not interpreted by the spirit. And even the figure of a man, be it Christ Himself, if it remains purely and simply an outline, traced upon the tablets of history as an objective thing, will remain for us a strange and outward reality inasmuch as we have not learned to turn from the ephemeral to the eternal, from the visible to the invisible, from a man, from his shadow, from his figure, from his gaze, from the sound of his voice, from his very virtues, to the spirit which animated him.

It is to establish this necessity that Christ, visible and tangible, clothed with all eternal power, often exclaimed, in speaking to the minds of His time: "My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me."

What do such announcements signify, if not that we should not consider the man who speaks to us; he is transient and mortal, for he will depart and the very form of his thought can vanish; but consider rather the spirit.

This is something which we do not know

well enough, my Brothers. We are realists and positivists, but of a realism and a positivism which do not reach far enough. We are still on the road.

We believe that when we have set foot on a stone we are on a firm foundation. We believe that when we hold a thing in our hands we possess it. But no, there is no firm foundation where man can set his foot; there is not a place on earth where a house can be built for all time; there is nothing here below which can be taken in the hand and of which it can be said, I hold the key. We all have need of conversion from external things, from the most magnificent books, from persons of high eminence who lure us from the Eternal; we have need of conversion from transitory things, which have a date, which belong to a day, a time, a people, and are of a certain mentality; we have need of conversion from such things to those which endure, which can recur incessantly, changing and journeying with us. Christ never uttered more splendid words than when He said: "It is expedient

for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you."

It is as if He had said: I must vanish from the visible in order that you may possess me in the invisible; I must die in order that I may live; I must be erased from the list of breathing men to create breadth of thought; the trace of my steps must be effaced from the dust of the roads of Galilee, in order that I may traverse all the roads of the world, to clothe again the most undreamed-of forms and to become the Spirit which I proclaim, which I embody, and of which I say to you that it bloweth where it listeth.

Nothing greater has ever been affirmed. Those for whom Christ is a memory, an event duly registered, a historical figure pure and simple, have known nothing of Him but His mortal mask. They have not recognized His immortal traits. The mask must be lifted and the profound substance arrived at. Then only can words such as these be understood, words entirely conformable to His spirit—"I have yet many things to say unto you!"

What is the meaning of these words? It is this: "Outside of that which you see in me and that which I teach you; outside of this form whose measure you easily take, which has a certain age, which walks and talks as you do; outside of this man who is of your country, I am another, I am one who belongs to all times and to all places. The spirit which animates me has the power to adapt itself to all future conditions of history." Our time, my Brothers, would be most miserable if we lived solely upon historical memories.

Doubtless no epoch has labored more diligently to bring to life the dead of history. But also no time has comprehended more fully how difficult it is, not only to fix a historical figure, but to comprehend it. Such difference is there between the ages! It is not only difficult to understand those who lived at the time of Christ, but it is difficult to understand those who lived two or three centuries ago. To trace the figures of our great reformers, to know what they did, hour by hour,

during the interesting periods of their lives, is a thing which is relatively possible. But that signifies nothing, if, with all this array of facts, we can not in the least reconstruct their souls. And, above all, it is not of any actual or practical use to us. That which must come to us and still help us is their spirit.

If we wish to take them as we find them, lying in the dust of centuries, their deeds and their words in their set literalness, we shall die in the air which they give us to breathe; they will steep us in poison; we shall live with corpses and in graves. We need the spirit to interpret the past.

Our fathers knew this; when they held in their hands the marvelous book within which shines the truth, both human and divine, they realized fully that this truth remains a dead letter and that this letter kills, if the spirit does not interpret it. But the spirit which lived in those who wrote thousands of years ago, can interpret their thoughts to us and to our contemporaries. And thus, transforming that which is ancient and decayed into a thing of

to-day, living and real, it offers us food for the soul.

Without the spirit man dies of inanition in the midst of the greatest traditional treasures; he has not the wherewithal to live, altho surrounded by an accumulation of provisions which comes to him from the ancients; he does not find even a glass of water to refresh his soul, and the entire immensity of holy books becomes for him an arid desert. The spirit must show him the way to the fountain-head and open it for him afresh. The spirit must infuse new life into the ancient writings and the ancient histories.

Moreover, even the life which is around and within us remains afar from us and you yourself are unknown to yourself, if the spirit does not inspire you. It is not only the past which is a dead letter to us, it is the present, your character, your destiny, the fact that you are here and that you do not understand why.

Your life is but a dream, a hollow hope. You pursue but a fantom when you seek to fathom the reason for existence, if the spirit

does not aid you to the interpretation and valuation of yourself.

The great thing is to receive this spirit. It is that toward which we must work. And how shall one proceed? To receive this spirit we must stand shoulder to shoulder, love one another, be faithful in the little things, kind toward our neighbors. We must love the brother whom we see in order that the Father whom we do not see shall be revealed to us. We must make our journey bravely, in the humble and miserable reality of mortal days, in order to penetrate the veil of the sanctuary.

We must renounce ourselves, in our baser rôles, not delighting in our justice and our mediocrity, not adoring the transient ages, massive things, brutal powers, and splendors of the flesh.

We must not be votaries of earthly wisdom, which is but the slyness of the fox and the cunning of the serpent. We must not sell our humanity unworthily, for a bit of gold, of pride or of pleasure, nor enter into the false bargain in which we trade the invisible for the

visible, because we consider the invisible is only hypothetical and the visible is certain. This is the condition to which we must bring ourselves in order to receive the spirit. We must hunger and thirst more and more and remain absolutely sincere.

The spirit of truth does not reveal itself to those who, in advance, desire that certain things should be and that other things should not be, and who have decided, like biased judges, that they will not plead the cause of anything which does not coincide with their interests or their preconceived ideas. We must be impartial in order to receive this spirit and allow it to come from the direction where we least expect it.

Christ and His spirit, in every age of humanity, are capable of supplying the word which the time demands. This word, from one day to another, can rise up in the midst of us.

I am absolutely convinced that, with a little goodness, a little sincerity, in divesting ourselves of our baser interests, in laying aside

the sacristal interests of men of the Church, in order to retain only their true and upright souls; in laying aside the narrowness, and the unjust dislikes of men of intellect and scientific researches, to progress with their humanity, their separate lights, with all that which in them is susceptible to the receiving of the spirit; in not condemning one another, because certain ones labor at one thing and others at another; in allowing the spirit to breathe in each one of us and in each sphere, according to its need, I am convinced that we shall receive it.

But men fortify themselves against the spirit. The spirit said: "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." That is to say: When you are not gathered together I shall not be there. We close all the approaches by which the spirit might enter. We stop up all chinks against it, as men who, not knowing what air is, bar its entrance in thinking of their health. Man does not wish the spirit to breathe upon him. The spirit is the draft

which brings disasters, it is also the vagabond which breaks down barriers and partitions. And, on countless occasions, man, the sinister keeper, has seized the spirit by the throat because it entered through unofficial ways. This is why we vegetate in sterility.

We are diplomats too experienced for the spirit, too full of our own learning; we know too many things and know them too insufficiently to be able to grasp the holy, true, and limpid wisdom from on high, which makes souls live, inclines men to filial confidence, to joy, to mutual goodness, takes the place of all things and knows how to supplement even our most lamentable ignorances.

"I will send you the Consoler," otherwise translated means "the Director." All Christians who are keenly alive, know who this mysterious companion is; they do not follow a Jew who lived two thousand years ago, however marvelous his people, however beautiful his soul, however perfect a temple he was for the spirit of the Eternal. They follow one who belongs to all countries, who

speaks all languages, and who can read all minds.

Oh! I am moved to tears when I read, in the second chapter of the Acts, that enumeration of men, of all colors and all nations, coming to the same light. Thus all those who breathe, suffer, seek, and struggle, beneath the luminous canopy of the sky; all those who crawl and torture and besmirch themselves in the dark night, the men of all races, white, black, and yellow, spread out over all parts of the earth, all those who have human blood in their veins, in whose breasts beats the poor heart which is at once so miserable and so noble, so great and so lowly, all those capable of hearing the voice of the spirit as they heard the voice of their mother, which is the great Consoler, the voice of Him who interprets us to ourselves, who tells us enough of ourselves so that we do not need to know more for our peace; the voice of Him who, no matter in what situation, even on the last day and at the last hour, even in the saddest event, can, with a word, put all things in their

relative positions, strengthen us to dare and to endure all.

I do not know whether you have already felt it, but when we have near us certain persons in whom we believe, who are very good, and of whom we entertain no doubts, they help us to bear heavy burdens. We recoil, but their words render us able to advance.

There is that in the spirit which enables a man to endure life and death, all the lights and all the shadows. In the spirit there is a means of livelihood for all times. It can be compared to the bit of bread which a stranger gave to a prophet to eat in the Old Testament: When Elias had eaten of this bread he walked for forty days and forty nights. There are in the spirit, force, power, tenderness, light, and radiance to fill our entire destiny, to enable us to pass through all the stages. There is for each of us, individually, in the spirit, something which reconciles us with ourselves, with the world, and with God. There is in the spirit, something which passes over the face

of each one of you the gentle hand of a mother, who wipes away all tears.

That did not happen there, nineteen centuries ago, upon a lovely Pentecost when the tongues of fire descended upon the heads of the faithful. That did not happen upon the shores of Jordan, in the hills of Galilee, where the footprints of the Lord were barely effaced. It happened in the Eternal and in the Permanent, for all the hours of the centuries to come, for you, for your children, for those who are far away, distant in point of time and distant also by their spirit.

This is what we must know and remember. We in no way live upon certain miserable courses of a bountiful repast of other times; we are not seated about the crumbs of the feast of the apostles and of the prophets. We have not come too late into a world which is too old still to believe in the spirit which animates the rising sun and speaks from the depths of our conscience. Wherever a man bears upon his brow the mark of God, we are in the presence of inexhaustible provisions, of

infinite wealth, which is put before us. We have only to take and assimilate them.

The spirit dwells among us, ready to lead us from truth to truth, if we only do not extinguish it. Let us believe in a rejuvenated world, in hope reborn, in new Pentecosts, which shall be repeated through all generations. Believe in the Master who said: "Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

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